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THREE FLIGHTS UP

THREE

FLIGHTS

UP

BY

HELEN WOODWARD

Author of
THROUGH MANY WINDOWS

Co-Author of
WAY OF THE LANCER

DODD, MEAD & COMPANY
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CHAPTER I

BROKEN DOLL

ON a Sunday morning in New York when I was eight years old, I stood bent over the big black kitchen stove with a duster in my hand. There was no fire burning, and a fresh newspaper covered the cold polished top. Mama always covered up everything she could after she cleaned it. The duster dangled forgotten; I was lost in reading something or other on the spread-out page. Over by the window talk was going on, and a few words sifted into my absent mind. "A combination on the first race—" They were talking about the horses. And the sound of running water in the sink back of me. Mama must be washing dishes. She wouldn't like that talk about the races. My uncle's slow voice was saying, "Two to one—sure thing." Now my father's, hurrying and eager and a little hoarse: "Not for me—handicap—fast track—ten to one shot."

Into the mixed mist of words read and heard cut my mother's voice, sharp and sudden. "Lünnchen! In God's will, there's that child reading again! Go on, hurry up with your dusting." She was speaking in German. Although she had been in New York for ten years, she knew only a few words of English. Other times she spoke gently but now her tone was quick and sharp.

I looked up, my eyes still vague with what I had been reading. Any scrap of printed paper I came across I had

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to read. I used to think how weak my will was because, no matter what I was doing, if a newspaper or a circular or anything that was printed came along, I would at once give in to it. I owned only one book. Perhaps if I had had other books, I would not have been tempted by newspapers and circulars.

So here I was again, doing the same thing, absorbed in some nonsense in the paper. I had really not been in the room at all. Guiltily I came back to where I was. The light in the room had the electric shine of a clear New York sun. In my memory I can see that kitchen only with the sun shining in it, although I know that many times rain and snow beat against the wide window and that at night it was yellow with gas light.

Mama was standing at the sink washing dishes. She was holding a wooden-handled knife down against the top of the washtub and scrubbing at it with a rag and Sapolio. She was not leaning over, but stood, shoulders up—her small plump body stiff as the knife she was polishing. She did not even bend her head. Hands still busy rubbing, she frowned at me. Her cheeks were red, the way they always were when she was working hard.

"I don't know what I'm going to do with you. The minute I put a piece of paper on the stove to keep it clean, you begin to read it." Crossly, to my father: "It's all your fault, Louis. The trash you bring into the house! Two newspapers you have to have every day. God knows what the child reads in them." Then back again to me: "Go on now into the parlor and get through with it."

With a feeling that it would be a long time—maybe not till the afternoon—before I'd have a chance to read

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another newspaper, I took a last gulp of the printed piece and turned away from it sideways. In front of the starched white cotton curtains at the wide window, Papa's head stood out like a black ball against the light. He was sitting at a large round table. Brown walnut it was, with two drop-leaf ends and extra leaves to be used for company.

All day long we used that table. Around it we lived most of our indoor lives. On its brown expanse we ate and we did our home lessons. On it Mama used to cut out the patterns for our dresses. And now Papa was working at it, making brown cigars with his beautiful hands.

The hands of cigar makers have fine smooth skin. That comes from working with tobacco. And besides, Papa's hands were a classic beauty in shape, though he did not know it.

In front of him lay a heap of naked-looking tobacco cylinders which he called "bunches" and a pile of brown, long leaves of Sumatra tobacco. On a thick square cigar-making board he rolled the bunches with the palm of his hand, and then with a swift motion spread a leaf, deftly wrapped the bunch in it, dipped it into paste, wet the tip with his tongue, and laid it in a wooden pressing form—a smooth elegant-looking finished cigar.

"Sure, it's a Havana filler," I heard Papa say. Uncle Samuel picked up one of the outside leaves. "This is a nice grade of Sumatra," he said.

The smell of the tobacco filled the room. I hated it. Not because of anything in the odor itself, but the smell of tobacco said how poor we were, and that Papa might lose his job at the cigar factory, and that he had to work

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at home on Sunday to make a little extra money. I cannot remember any time when I did not know this.

Uncle Samuel, Mama's brother, was leaning back on the horsehair sofa smoking a good cigar, his serene face looking even fresher than usual near Papa's dark skin. He was my favorite uncle. He had a solid, strong, quiet look, and ironic laughter ran through his slow speech. Papa and he had been friends as young boys in Germany and they remained so all their lives. Uncle Samuel looked like a farmer—round face, broad shoulders, and solid body. But there was nothing of the farmer about Papa's looks, though he always wanted to live in the country and grow things. With his thin body, his stiff black pompadour and broad nose, Papa looked like a Russian intellectual. The first time I saw him in a bathing suit, I was surprised because his head seemed to belong to a larger body. If you had asked me then the color of his eyes, I could not have told you. He had such bushy black eyebrows, and such a big black moustache, and the eyes were set so deep that I was almost grown before I knew that they were gray. Uncle Samuel smiled his ironical slow smile at me, while he picked up a finished cigar and pointed it at Papa. "Well, if you did have free trade, you couldn't make these in competition with imported cigars."

"Yes, but everything else would be cheaper."

I heard no more because with a sullen face I dashed out of the kitchen and ran to the parlor to do the dusting. I said to myself, "Why does Mama snap at me? I can't help it if they were talking about the races. It's not my fault." Her anger annoyed me but did not frighten me. Her rosy cheeks and pretty face could not look really

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angry, and she was so often cross with nervous strain that we hardly listened to her scoldings.

We lived in what was called a railroad flat, which means a flat without a hall. The kitchen was at the back, the parlor at the front, and between lay three bedrooms. Since there was no hall, you had to go through all the bedrooms to reach the parlor.

When I got to the parlor I felt better. I liked to dust and to do housework. And if there was nothing around to read, I could do the work well. Nothing to read—no book or paper—ever was left in the parlor.

Mama had just swept the red carpet with the green flowers which covered the whole room. She had scattered salt and then used the broom hard. Everything was now covered with a good layer of dust, so it was really worth while using a rag on it. Usually heavy house-cleaning was done on Friday, but perhaps the next day was to be some Jewish holy day, or perhaps we expected company this Sunday afternoon, and so a little extra cleaning was done.

First I pushed aside the heavy white lace curtains at one of the two windows that looked out on the street three stories below. Peeking out, I caught sight of a neighbor boy on the sidewalk. Hurriedly I pulled up the window, called out some abusive word and then softly closed the window, leaving him to look up with useless rage. Standing behind the curtains I saw him spit toward the unresponding house and then go on about his business.

Briskly I ran the duster into all the crevices of the black cherry wood of the gay red plush chairs and sofa, and over the marble top of the table and around the

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walnut frame of the big mirror that ran from floor to ceiling.

I was singing, but in a low voice because Papa said that I could not carry a tune and I did not want him to hear me. I sang:

“Down went McGinty
To the bottom of the sea.
They haven’t got him yet;
He must be very wet,
Dressed in his best Sunday clothes.”

Except on the mantelpiece there were no ornaments to dust, that is, if you leave out the heavy gilt-framed portraits of my grandfather and grandmother. I have no idea what kind of face grandfather had under his beard and whiskers. Grandmother wore the usual straight black wig of the Jewish orthodox matron and she looked homely. People used to say I looked like her. Though she had a gentle, kind face, I hated her portrait.

I was glad there were no ornaments about the room to dust, but I was sorry, too, because it seemed to me that Tante Gustel’s parlor looked much prettier. She used to take scraps of colored silk, fill them with sachet and cotton, tie them together with ribbons like a bunch of grapes and hang them from the chandelier. She saved her empty eggshells and gilded them, and walnut shells, too. She gilded empty bottles. Mama agreed that these were all very pretty, but she had no time to make them or to keep them clean. Our flat had an almost modern bareness, but that was because we were hard up and not because we had taste.

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With real fear, I went toward the mantelpiece and its few ornaments. Not the kind of fear that you would have in an earthquake or a skidding automobile, but a dark, encircling horror. The pair of tall vases was all right. I dusted them. And then the mantel's most precious ornament. Until he was six years old, my brother Benny had long golden curls. To go with them Mama made him a little black velvet suit—like Lord Fauntleroy, whose picture on a calendar hung on the kitchen wall. Benny used to scream, stamp his feet, lie on the floor and kick, and he had to be slapped every time to get him into the Lord Fauntleroy suit. One day, Papa, without saying a word, took him to a barber shop and brought him back with shorn head. Mama cried, then she took the curls and had a tree made of them with little flowers of blue beads. Now it stood framed in a gilt frame on the parlor mantelpiece. I dusted it slowly.

But I could put off the bad moment no longer. The little pair of bisque figures must be done. One of them was all right—the little boy figure. He was soon finished and set back in his place. But the other—the little girl—my stomach got mixed up with my backbone as I touched her. The head was broken off and merely set back loosely on the body. I was afraid it might come off. Gingerly dusting it, I held the two pieces together in one hand so that they could not come apart.

I had many fears. I was afraid of horses and dogs and cats. But the fear that topped all these—the one that ran through my childhood as the fear of ghosts does with other children—was the fear of a broken doll. I do not know what started it. Perhaps when I was a baby I saw

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a broken doll and thought it was a person. Or perhaps I saw somebody badly hurt and got that mixed up with a doll. Or—when I was four years old I was running through the flat from the kitchen to the parlor and I fell down and hit my forehead against a chair. The blood came and I jumped up and ran pelting back into the kitchen, yelling at the top of my voice: "Mama, I broke my head. Mama, I broke my head. The blood's all running out! Look, the blood's all running out!" My head seemed to me like a doll's head. Or this, which while the most reasonable, is the least pleasant. I had been the only child, the pet of all the family. When I was sixteen months old along came Dolly, a beautiful baby over whom everyone oh'd and ah'd. And with bronchitis, so that she had to be watched and tended every minute. So at once I became a nobody. I helped take care of her, I was proud of her beauty. But she had displaced me. Dolly . . . doll . . . perhaps in those dark undercurrents of the baby mind, I mixed up every doll with Dolly.

But, however it began, my horror of a wounded doll was so black that I dared not touch any doll. If I saw one that was broken, I would run away. A doll that was whole seemed nice enough, but how did I know that, if I took it in my hand, a finger mightn't come off, or the eyes that opened and shut wouldn't fall down inside the head? Rag dolls might as well have been broken dolls. They had the same ugly meaning to me. A doll without a head was worse than any. Whenever I saw a child take a bite out of a chocolate doll or a candy dog I would shrivel up inside.

So I held the bisque figurine together till it was dusted.

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At last she stood there looking at me with a pleasant smile on her face. I began to sing again "Down went McGinty," when Mama came hurrying into the room. "Sing in the morning, cry before night," she said, speaking as always in German. In English I answered, "Is dinner ready?" But the words "Sing before morning, cry before night" sank deeply into my mind. She said them often, and they were to cause me a lot of trouble after I grew up.

"Yes, dinner's ready." Mama nodded and straightened out her big checked apron. "That little gas stove," she said, "and Papa working in the kitchen. Dinner's late." That's really why she's cross this morning. It upsets her to be a minute late for anything. She looked around the room and ran her hand along the carving of a chair. She said nothing about it, so I knew the dusting was all right. "Call the children. But be careful! Don't you lean out of the window. Don't fall out." And she went back into the kitchen.

Across the street most of the stores were closed, and the sidewalk had its Sunday morning washed and empty look. Down the middle of the street a man was walking with a basket, yelling something that sounded like "Shymack Firmich." A purple pile of flowers broke his chant into words. "Fresh lilac, five a big bunch." It had nothing to do with me. We never bought flowers. I suppose that meant it was spring; but when I remember those years of my childhood, it seems to me that it was always spring. No summer or winter or fading leaves of the fall—only spring. On the sidewalk stood my sister Dolly leaning against the baby's carriage and looking so pretty with

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her lovely curls and her pointed, dimpled face. How jolly she was, and why couldn't I be jolly and pretty like that? At the top of my voice I yelled "Dolly." She pretended not to hear and I thought, now she's being spiteful again, and so I yelled "All right, spite-face. You won't get any dinner," and banged the window. I knew she would come and bring Benny and the baby along with her.

Back in the kitchen Uncle Samuel was gone, and all signs of Papa's work had disappeared. The big table was spread with a shining white oilcloth, but there were only two places set on it. In the middle was a glass holder with spoons upside down, and at each place lay a knife and fork with a black handle. There were no napkins. Beside the table stood the baby's high chair. At the other end of the kitchen three small red chairs sat around a little red table. That is where we always ate, with our own small knives and forks and spoons.

Dolly and Benny, with the baby, came noisily into the room. Papa looked up from the Sunday paper with a frown, and at once we hushed. We were all afraid of him.

All through dinner Dolly and I quarreled in low voices about who was to wipe the dishes. I pointed out with energy and much repetition that I had done the dusting. She said that she had been minding the baby. She knew that this argument was weak, and all the time she knew that she would have to do the dish-wiping. We quarreled just the same. Perhaps for the fun of it. Or perhaps we quarreled about wiping the dishes because we did not really understand the deep differences which made us disagree. This quarrel about wiping dishes grew between us

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as the years went by until Papa found it unbearable and said, "We will settle this now and forever. One week Lünchen wipes the dishes, and the next week Dolly does it." So that quarrel was settled, but we had plenty of others. We quarreled about who should run each errand, who should take a bath first, who should have the crusty end of the loaf, who should mind the baby.

But that Sunday Mama was in a hurry to have things cleared up, so I had to help by putting the dishes away. Mama wondered at the even care with which I set cups and plates in their places in the closet. I would have died rather than tell her or anyone else the reason. Our best cups with the moss roses and the handle on the sugar-bowl that looked like a seashell were lovely. They had been Mama's finest wedding present. It seems to me now that they and the brass candlesticks on the mantel were the only really pretty things in the house. But we used these only for special company, and today we had eaten from our everyday heavy plain thick white cups. Even those I liked to handle. But that was not why I put them so carefully and so evenly in their places. It was more than that. I played a game with cups and saucers. They seemed to me to be alive, and their feelings would be hurt if they were not placed even and straight.

I still find something lovely about a cup, especially the kind we had then—the kind with tall straight sides. Things around me no longer seem alive, but I still feel uneasy if they are not in even order and in place.

CHAPTER II

PAPA AND MAMA

FROM the time he was thirty until he died at seventy-six, Papa played the races. For forty-six years he was sure that he could pick enough winners to make a million dollars. He was sure of it when he was fifty. "I started the beginning of the summer with a ten-dollar bill," he said, "and now already I've turned it into forty dollars. I picked 'em all right. The only trouble was I didn't have enough nerve." He was still sure when he was seventy. "Don't laugh at me," he said; "I'll show you yet." And when one day he was seventy-six and he stopped looking at the racing sheets, we knew that his life was over. He had at last given up hope of making a million dollars. A week later he died.

Forty-six years. We were small children just beginning to go to school when it began, and we were middle-aged when it was over. To Mama it was a long nightmare; it could not happen to her, and yet it did happen—the way things do in bad dreams. Betting on the races was sinful and shocked her. It was foolish and annoyed her. It was reckless, and of recklessness she had no understanding. And yet by that fantastic irony which sometimes seems to me the only destiny there is, it was through her doing that he ever began playing the races at all.

Papa had no real childhood. Near Warsaw in Poland my grandfather was the factor of a huge estate. A factor

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was a sort of superintendent, only more so. It was a good job because the place was not merely a farm and a forest and a house, as it might be today. It was a self-supporting little world which ground its own grain, wove its own cloth, shod its own horses, bred sturgeon, made caviar, salted fish. It was a community with villages of mill-workers as well as farmers of the soil. So Grandfather did well, but his eight sons did not do well at all.

He was a tall powerful man, but all his sons were small. Grandfather was one of those selfish lusty souls who look so attractive in historical novels but are awful to live with. Most of the money he made he used for fun, and Papa said that the only notice he took of his boys was to punish them with harsh beatings. Later Grandfather got another job, a good one too—in charge of a factory in the city. After that, Papa did not even get enough to eat except when he went to his grandmother's farm. Grandpa needed too much for his amusements. What these were I do not know. Papa spoke of "friends" and "restaurants" but I think these were dressed up words for less dignified realities. Or perhaps they were not. My grandmother, who was a meek old-fashioned Jewish mother, bore her life in despairing silence.

Papa's family was a queer lot of people. One of his uncles, a rabbi, had been murdered in a feud between two groups of Jewish religionists. Another uncle came to Arkansas in pioneer days, got rich and went back home, lost the money and killed himself. Tall and handsome, with a tall and handsome wife, he was a figure of romance to Papa. There were other suicides. There were some who were almost beggars. There is my Uncle Moses, the eldest

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of the brothers, who has never done a thing in his life except to study the Talmud. He was still studying it, last time I heard, at the age of eighty-six. He never earned a cent and never did any work, but he managed to have three wives and large numbers of children and grandchildren. None of Papa's family lived in New York. They were scattered—some in Poland, one in Germany, one in Turkey, some in Arkansas, some in Alabama.

When Papa was thirteen, and had passed the Bar Mitzvah which makes a Jewish boy into a man in the Congregation, Grandpa began to say it was time he earned his own living. So Papa and his brother Bernhard, who was fourteen, went away to Germany. They had no money and had to earn their way from the beginning. For ten years they worked in a cigar factory and lived together and went to night school. But while Papa absorbed the new Marxian Socialism of the German workman, Uncle Bernhard studied courses at night school that would help him to get ahead.

Germany was then sizzling with socialist ideas. There had been first the earlier emotional dreams of communal work and idealism, beginning with Fourierism and going on to the communal settlements. Then Marx, who even in German, was difficult and indeed impossible reading for the average workman. Meantime Bismarck was warding off Socialism by handing bits of benevolent reform to the Germans—old-age insurance, out-of-work insurance—that sort of thing. Workers like Papa understood the basic idea but, without education or a scientific mind, they could not understand all the ramifications. If here and there a bit was offered that looked as though it fitted in with Social-

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ism, naturally they grabbed at it. Papa could not always see that these bits might lead away from the Socialism that he wanted. His Socialism was a substitute for a belief in Heaven rather than a carefully thought out set of ideas. Although he did not know it, it was an outgrowth of Christianity: "The meek shall inherit the earth." The people who do the world's work ought to be paid for it. People should not be punished because they were born poor.

Bellamy's "Looking Backward" put all the ideas of Papa's kind of Socialism into a vivid story. He read the book over and over again, and when I was in my teens I read it too. "Looking Backward" is the story of a man who went to sleep in 1880 and woke in the year 2000 and found himself living in a Socialist state. Everybody got the same income. Everybody did four hours of real work a day. That meant work that contributed something to society. The working week was five days and there was a month's vacation with full pay. The government owned all industry. People started to work after they had been well educated, when they were about twenty or so, and stopped at forty-five and kept on drawing a full income. Many of Bellamy's purely mechanical devices in that book have come into reality with radio, television and so on. His social paradise seems a little nearer than it did when Papa first heard of it, but for all I know it may be not nearer at all, but farther away.

When Papa was twenty-three, Uncle Bernhard married a bright-eyed energetic young woman. Papa left them in Germany and came to New York to make his fortune. But in Germany Uncle Bernhard, with the help of Aunt Re-

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gina, made a fortune; and over here Papa never made anything more than a hard living.

To America Papa brought his passionate interest in Socialism and in labor unions and their politics. He at once joined the Socialist Labor Party, the Left Wing Party of the day, with Daniel De Leon at its head. And of course the cigar-maker's union. This was a fairly strong union. Hardly anybody smoked cigarettes, and no good cigars were made by machine. They were highly skilled workers and not hard to unionize.

When we were children he had forgotten all but a few words of his Polish. Poland stood only for his wretched childhood and his harsh father, and he wanted to forget all of it as fast as he could. He spoke German beautifully. His English was fluent and good, but he would pronounce *w* like *v*, and in long words stress the wrong syllable. He was likely to say "pee-oneers" instead of "pioneers," and "accúracy." He loved this country so much and was so proud of being an American citizen that the only thing he used to tell about his first days in New York was how he went to board with an American family so that he would have to learn to speak English. The landlady handed him an object and said "key." That was his first English word. He always told that story with delight. But Papa's voice was more agreeable when he spoke German than when he spoke English. This is almost always true of uneducated foreigners. They learn English without inflection or modulations so that, no matter how fluent, it is likely to sound flat. The music seems to disappear even from the Italian voice when a Sicilian shifts to newly learned English.

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The next thing Papa did after he got a job was to meet my mother. She was the first round rosy pretty girl he knew in New York, and she was the best-loved sister of Samuel Sachs who had been Papa's dearest friend in Germany. And that made Mama all right with him. Her solid, healthy strength steadied his shifting moods. She had tapering arms and shining black hair whose wide waves coiled neatly and richly around her head. The dark hair with her blonde clear skin and gray eyes gave her what is known as Irish coloring, but she was far from being Irish. She came from a little village called Kempen, near Breslau in Prussia, where there were two kinds of people—Catholic peasants and Jews, and all of them poor. She had never known a time when she had not worked.

When Mama left home she did not leave, like Papa, with childish bitterness, but with the sharp tragedy of a grown woman. She was twenty-three years old, and her mother wept helplessly as she watched her go. Five children had sailed away to America, and only one of the five did she ever see again.

Mama's father drove a horse and wagon around the nearby farms and towns to sell odds and ends. He was a peddler who went regularly to the synagogue, a tall thin man with a beard, who believed quite calmly that he was going to heaven when he died. He kept his mind on heaven, which was pretty lucky for him in the circumstances. His seven children grew rosy and healthy on buttermilk, potatoes and herring. All of them were kindly and good-tempered and, except for Uncle Samuel, given more to physical than to mental energy. There were legends in the family about my great-grandfather, a huge young man

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proud of his strength. A wagon got stuck in the mud. He lifted it with his shoulder and fell dead.

Grandmother was small and stout and lame; she did dressmaking to help bring up her four boys and three girls. So when Mama was only four years old, she had to give up her own pleasures to the needs of smaller babies. That is how it came about that she built her life on a pattern of self-sacrifice. It was as needful to her as breathing, and if often she made sacrifices for us that we did not want, she could not help it. She started the pattern too young to change.

Little Frederika Sachs, when she was only a baby herself, had ordered around a younger brother and sister. Frederika grew up and was called Fannie and married Papa and had a family of her own. But she had to rule over that too—with a gentle, if sometimes a crossly nervous manner—and sometimes with a suffering manner—but always with an iron and self-sacrificing will. She was by training a matriarch. She could not understand that neither Papa nor any of her children quite fitted into that pattern.

With his usual dashing hurry Papa asked Mama to marry him the third time he saw her. Mama was living with cousins and helping take care of the household. She did not like that, and anyway her idea of the golden end of everything was to have your own home and children. To do that you had to get married, so they were married right away.

Both of them believed that they had miraculously wonderful children, and they both spent most of their energy for these wonderful children. But right there all common

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thought or aim or object between them ended. They did not think together about anything else. There was nothing you could name, no abstract ideal or concrete object, nothing that might happen from morning until night or from the beginning of the week until the end about which they felt alike.

Papa and Mama did not come in neatly labeled packages at all. Mama was one of the most austere people I have ever known. She always sat in a straight chair without arms. She could not sit in any other kind of chair. In those days women wore around the house loose comfortable wrappers, called mother-hubbards. Well-to-do women had them in silk and lace; poor women wore them in cambric, held in around the waist by a gingham apron. Mama never owned one. She said they were sloppy and lazy. Corsets then were long and heavily boned, so tight that they left heavy marks on the skin. Many women left them off while they did their housework or rested in the afternoon. Mama put hers on as soon as she got out of bed and she took it off only to go to bed and for her weekly bath.

The only easing she allowed herself was the wearing of felt slippers, because her feet hurt and slippers saved her shoes. Of these she had only one pair, high button black ones which cost three dollars and which she wore for five years. She was proud of her small feet, till they became disfigured from cheap shoes. A peaches-and-cream skin, clear gray eyes, hair that was never out of place, gingham dresses that were always smooth, wrapped her in handsome neatness. In summer she looked cool, even with drops of perspiration on her upper lip. But it was her skin that she was proud of. It was clear, unblemished

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and of a beautiful blonde tone with fine rose in the cheeks. She said she never bothered about it or did anything to take care of it, yet no matter how busy she was she always found time to heat a kettle of water to wash her face, while most of her neighbors just gave theirs a hurried scrub in cold water. But I think it was perspiration that was her chief cosmetic. It washed away all imperfections. She used to say, "Even if I have a sore or something it comes on my ankle where it is hidden away." We thought that was pretty clever of her. When I was a child I thought her hands were ugly. They were rough and knuckled with work. After she was able to stop doing housework I saw that her hands had delicate skin and were well shaped.

It was part of Mama's austerity that when she was in pain she never moaned or made a sound. When I was about thirty-five I had my appendix taken out, and when I groaned, I apologized to the nurse, "I'm sorry to make such a fuss." That woman had sense. She said: "Go right ahead. Moan and groan as hard as you can. It makes it easier." It helps to moan or to whimper. It may be hard on the people around but it certainly is easier for one's self. But Mama did not believe in making things easier. Suffering had to be suppressed as well as all other emotions.

Yet Mama, though she always sat or stood so straight, laughed easily and often. You could do nothing with her by argument, but a lot by a joke. If this were a novel, Mama, being austere, would be grave and serious; and Papa, as a gambler, would be laughing and full of fun. But that is not the way people are. In our family the serious

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one was a gambler, and the austere one was full of fun.

Papa, who loved to take a chance, had long spells of tragic gloom. Sometimes for as long as a whole week he did not say a single unneeded word to anyone in the house. Poles often seem to be like that. Why Poles more than other people should have the habit of these moody silences, I do not know. But it is common among them—among the Catholic peasants and nobles as well as among the Jews. It falls on the household like thunder without sound. A black blanket drops down on the spirit, and you twist your neck about and push your head forward against it, trying to push it away. In those silent spells, Papa sat at the table looking at his plate, ate what was put before him, and then either put on his hat and went out, or hid behind his widely opened newspaper. He answered if we spoke to him, but in monosyllables, and we took care not to speak to him.

When in a good mood Papa was ingratiating and charming. But charm and graciousness were two things that Mama looked on with suspicion. Under the head of flattery she put almost any compliment that one person might pay to another. She worked herself nearly to a frazzle for us, but she paid us no compliments.

Rules drove Papa crazy, while Mama lived by rule. That, perhaps, and not religious feeling, is what made her such a devout Jewess. The Jewish ritual with its elaborate and detailed set of rules suited her temperament. Papa, who was irritated by this set of regulations, was naturally an atheist. But Papa's atheism was more tolerant than Mama's Jewishness. He merely thought religious people foolish, while Mama thought that atheists were wicked

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and that Christians knew no better.

Mama's ideal of life was simple: you lived plainly and you saved every penny that was not needed for food and clothes. No matter how hard up you were you had to live in a flat that had light and air. But you spent nothing on amusements or nonsense, and nonsense was a broad term. Nonsense included five cents spent for candy, or carfare to the park, or a flowering plant for the fire-escape. While she did not mind giving up the amusements, she would have liked to make plants grow. But if you threw nickels around, how could you bring up your children on about sixteen dollars a week? You worked hard and you saved your pennies until you had a few hundred dollars. Then you bought a little store and you sold things over the counter and worked hard again and saved again until you had enough money to buy a brownstone house, and then you were all right. Mama never managed to save more than one hundred dollars at one time, but her dream was to save a thousand.

Papa's idea was different. He dreamed only of millions—well, perhaps hundreds of thousands—and a little store and a brownstone house had no place in those dreams. What was the good of saving fifty cents or a dollar a week? You never could get anywhere that way. Better not save anything! Better use the dollar and take a chance on the races, or in the Louisiana Lottery!

Mama had no patience with Papa's interest in social questions, and she could not understand why he spent his evenings at union or Socialist party meetings. "For a bachelor, all right. But for a married man with children—haven't you got a home?" But Papa had not had a home

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since he was thirteen years old and he did not really know what to do with one. "If I had a store I'd have to be out every night," said Papa, "waiting on the customers."

"That's different," Mama said. "You'd be making some money. It would be worth while."

When he was an old man he still went out in the evenings. He was seventy-six when he made his doctor promise not to tell us how ill he was. He refused to lie around at home or stay in bed. Instead he kept right on going about in storm and snow, until suddenly he was very ill, and then quickly he died.

When Henry George ran for office as Mayor of New York, Papa turned from Socialism to the alluring and so simple Single Tax idea. If only unimproved land was taxed, there would be only an infinitesimal tax on the land on which our house stood. And so the rent would go down. And for the same reason, the rents of all the stores would go down too, so they could sell their goods cheaper. And the factory would pay only a trifling rent and almost no taxes on its land and so it could pay higher wages. Then Papa met Henry George and liked him and thought him a great man. Papa worked hard for him—spoke at meetings and electioneered—and carried our district for Henry George. That took even more time in the evenings. It was Papa's highest accomplishment in politics, but it marked the end of all that activity for him.

Mama said she was lonely in the evenings. She had to stay with the children. As long as we were awake, her life was vivid. She romped with us and sang to us and had a hilarious time. But we had to be in bed and asleep early, and after that the evenings stretched out for her in a long

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monotone of silence under the yellow gas light. Of course she had to stay home with us when we were asleep. But if Papa stayed home too he could help put us to bed and at least there would be somebody in the room. Mama, who grew up in a tiny house with seven brothers and sisters, had never been alone in her life, and she hated it. And then she thought that Papa ought to spend his evenings figuring ways to make money. Socialism was just nonsense, she said, and the labor union activities dangerous. She was right; they were dangerous. He lost several jobs because he led strikes. But he always got others.

It would be natural to think that she meant to be unkind to him, but it would not be true. She thought he was making a tragic mistake which would ruin his life and ours. She did not understand that he had to live by his temperament and not by hers. A little flattery, a compliment now and then would have soothed Papa. But that was something she would not deal in. And if Papa had known a little more about women, perhaps he could have handled the tangle better. But he had not a trace of those feminine qualities which help a man to get on with women. He was intensely masculine. The only answer he knew was sullen silence. What might have been among well-to-do people a small divergence of taste became to them, because of their cramped lives and their needs, a smouldering volcano—one that always threatened and never burst.

Along this line Mama fought with shrugs, with suffering resignation, with brief sudden outbursts of protest until Papa gave up. Not altogether, but nearly all. He still went to union meetings, and once or twice he led a strike. But he took no further part in political work except to

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argue with his friends.

In a childish way Papa adored making speeches. On his feet before a crowd, he was at ease and talked with charm and excitement—the two do not often go together in political orators. He was a popular speaker. When he gave up this speaking, which after all was his one creative expression in life, and when he gave up the union meetings and the Socialist meetings, something in his life closed down forever. But his mental and spiritual hunger had to find something else to feed upon. It was then that he began to play the races. I feel sure that if he had been able to keep up the political work for which he was fitted, he would never have bet on the races at all. I don't know how effective that work was in any larger way, but for him as a human being it was important.

CHAPTER III

PLAYING THE RACES

WITHOUT the relief of his gambling, Papa could not have borne the pent-in day-by-day sameness of cigar making. An active man by temperament, he had to sit on a bench ten or twelve hours a day. He wanted to live in the country, but in the country there were no cigar factories. A good swimmer, a good skater and a good walker, for many years he had not a single chance to swim or to skate. He was so eager that when he walked he held his body at a slant and his head seemed to be rushing forward, afraid of losing something of the excitement of living. When we walked with him he always hurried on ahead and then looked around, impatient, to see what had happened to us. It was a habit that made Mama cross. She said a husband and wife should walk together, side-by-side.

But in spite of the sitting still, he liked being with the other men in the shop. It was not a place of clattering, slashing, pounding noise like a modern machine shop, the sort of thing you think of when you hear the word "factory." The kind of cigars Papa worked on were made by hand. The only machinery was the press which finally firmly squeezed the cigars into shape—and this made no noise. And there were sometimes a few bunch-making machines on another floor. New York was a smaller place then, and the factory was usually light enough and airy—only the air was full of the smell of

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tobacco and it was damp because the tobacco had to be kept moist. Tobacco cannot be worked when it is dry. Cigar makers never said, "I make cigars for a living," but, "I work on the bench," although sometimes it was a plain wooden chair. Even eight hours a day of such sitting is too much. Many of them had lumbago and hemorrhoids, and there was a good deal of tuberculosis from the dampness.

When the factory was working full time Papa made fifteen dollars a week. And, like all the other workers, he was allowed to take six cigars a day for his own use. "Smokers" they were called. But few of the men could afford to smoke all six cigars.

Papa allowed himself two smokers; the others he sold. That was easy; they were good Havana cigars, and a bargain at five cents apiece. They brought his earnings up to about sixteen-twenty in good weeks. It was not enough, so when he could get an order he made cigars at home on Sunday or in the evenings. Sixteen-twenty was good pay for a workman in 1892, and bought about as much as thirty-five dollars a week in 1935. Our rent for five rooms, with running cold water, but no bath or heat, was fifteen a month; fresh eggs were twenty for a quarter, apples ten cents a bushel, and peaches five cents for two or three quarts.

The cigar makers, on the whole, knew more and had better minds than other workmen, and there was a lot of argument and talk while they worked. Once in a while, as in Spanish-American cigar factories, or in monasteries, a man who was out of work sat on a high chair reading to the others from some book on history, biog-

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raphy or economics. Nearly all the workmen gambled in some way. The ones who did not gamble at all were the dullest among them. But none of the other men made a career of it, as Papa did. Papa had to do things with enthusiasm or else let them alone.

Papa had no love of horse flesh, no love for horses as living creatures. Uncle Bernhard loved horses for their own sake, and for forty years he spent six months in each year riding a horse around over the tobacco plantations of Turkey, buying up the growing tobacco for the international market. The War broke that up and afterward he was too old to start again. The only thing about age that made him sad was that he could no longer spend most of his time on horseback.

Papa was not like that at all. All he cared about horses was how fast they could run. He had no use for tips or tipsters, but he was good at handicapping. He watched the records of horses, jockeys, owners and stables; from this "dope" he judged which horse was likely to win a race, whether the odds on that horse were good enough. For this he had to know how old a horse was, whether he ran well in a short race or a long one, whether he was better on a fast track or a muddy one. And he had to know the records of the jockies, how much each weighed and if he were likely to pull a race. It was a complicated process—a combination of logical deduction and elaborate figuring. I know because when I was fifteen years old I used to help him do it, and so earned my first pair of opera glasses. He would have found it a dull bookkeeping job, and would have hated it if it hadn't had the push of possible winnings behind it.

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Every day Papa bought two papers—the German *Volks-zeitung* for its radical labor news, and the English paper for other news and the daily racing chart. These charts, which contained the records of horses and jockies, he cut out and kept carefully for many years. They lay stacked up in neat piles on a closet shelf. No longer did he go out to address political meetings; now in the evening he sat bent over his racing sheets, figuring. As soon as supper was cleared away, he got out his piles of records and his paper and pencil, and spread them out on the round kitchen table. He was lost to all sight and sound in the room, a scholar bent over precious manuscripts. We would have to speak to him twice before he heard us.

He had an enormous admiration for a man called “Pittsburgh Phil,” one of the famous racing characters of that time, a sport who made his pile on a shoestring. I saw him once at Sheepshead Bay. He was a handsome, flashy person, and he could pick winners. Papa could pick winners as well as Pittsburgh Phil. But he would say: “I’m no real gambler. That’s the trouble with me. When I lose a couple of races, I quit for the day. If I was a gambler, I’d double my bets and go on.” That, of course, is true. You can always tell the natural gambler by that. When he is losing, he doubles his bets and goes on. He does it when playing poker or playing the stock market or betting on the races. But Papa was a gambler all right. The only reason he stopped when he began to lose was that a greater need overlay the gambler’s instinct—the need to take care of us. He dared not take any risks with the money set aside for us. Years later when I went to the Girls’ Latin School in Boston, Papa used to walk to work and home

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again, five miles each way, winter and summer, to save sixty cents carfare a week. Sixty cents seems a little money for so much effort, but it helped keep me at school. That sort of thing interferes a good deal with the true gambling spirit.

He had neither the time nor the money to go often to the race-track when we were children. There were races at Saratoga, but he never got there at all till years afterward. The big track around New York was at Sheepshead Bay near Coney Island. A ticket for the field cost fifty cents, and the carfare was twenty cents more, but on Saturday afternoons when the shop was closed he sometimes spent the seventy cents. And sometimes his friends, John and Otto, the butchers, gave him money to bet for them, and he went to the track at their expense. He could get better odds there and besides, he could look over the horses for himself. He could get the last minute news, all of which put him in a better position to win. Otherwise he played at a poolroom, or some bookmaker's tout came around and gathered the bets.

I know he could pick winners well, because he never really lost any money at racing, and for some summers in later years he made a living for us all summer long by his betting. In those years we had good times when he took us all down to Manhattan Beach to swim, and for a fine lunch at the old big Manhattan Beach Hotel, and then to see the races.

It is a popular notion that gamblers are always interested in liquor and in women. I can say from those that I knew as a child that this is not so. Indeed the opposite is true. Often gamblers are seen with loud-looking women

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in flashy restaurants and at the track, not because they like the women but because they want to show off. Papa certainly never drank except in a European way. He had beer once in a while with his dinner, or he took a small glass of wine or brandy which he drank neat. But none of it had any importance to him or any effect on him.

And as for women, he hardly knew they existed. He was almost unbelievably naïve about them. He liked to be with men, and I have never known anybody who had so many friends among men, always from the time we were children until the end of his life. In his last years he was surrounded by groups of adoring young men who were unrelated to him, but who called him Grandpa. When we were children, the women of the family—our cousins and aunts—did not like Papa. He was too strange a creature. It was only when he was old and knew the more daring younger generation that he found admirers among the women.

Just as the loss of his political career was a tragedy to Papa, so his playing the races was a tragedy to Mama. We were sitting around our red toy table once playing poker with the broken scraps of decks that the grown-ups had discarded. I slapped the cards down on the table with a dash, the way Papa did. Mama, hurrying by, looked back and pleaded with us, "Don't play cards like a gambler." There was this difference between them in every act of their lives. Papa would slap down his cards with bold swift sureness. Mama would look over her hand, select a card, pull it out slowly, and lay it down carefully in the middle of the table.

I really believe the most terrible and tragic moment of

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our childhood came one day when Mama, suddenly desperate with long suffering bitterness, gathered together the whole pile of racing charts that Papa had been saving for years and burned them. That night Papa came home and, while he was waiting for supper, went to the closet for the papers. He looked blankly at the empty shelf and turned around bewildered.

"Have you been cleaning this closet again?" he asked with a frown.

"No," Mama flushed. "I couldn't stand the sight of those dirty things any more. I burned them."

His face grew terrible. This time he did not go into a black silence. He burst out in his rage. "How do you dare? Doesn't anything in this house belong to me? Can I have nothing to live for?" He said only these few words, and there was no cursing or swearing in them, but they filled us with shivering terror. And then he took a chair and threw it across the room and smashed it against the wall. For weeks the house was as though there had been a death in it.

With my father we would have been a quiet household, conversing about vast affairs of world import, about politics or the pseudo-scientific news in the Sunday papers—Papa believed in all these weekly miracles—or we would have listened to good music. We would have talked about the races, of course, a good deal and we would have gone to the track to see them whenever there was money to pay the fare. There would have been crowds of company. Some days we would have lived on caviar and steaks, and others on salt herring. We wouldn't have done much laughing, but we would have lived on an exciting, high and

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dangerous plane.

Papa was melodramatic. He was best when he was on show. Mama had no sense of drama at all and was bewildered and annoyed by it. No wonder then that I cannot put my hand out for caviar without remembering that farina is better for me.

With Mama we had to live carefully. Not much company, no spots on dresses, solid pot roast, sensible turnips and farina. I am sure Papa would never have dreamed of giving us turnips to eat, or farina. Papa was untidy. He dropped ashes from his cigar all over his clothes and on the floor. He would not put on a clean collar often enough and he got stains on his tie and coat. When he came home from work he always took off his collar and tie and coat and sat around in his shirt and suspenders all evening. The collars men wore then were stiff, and he had to save laundry. But the general slipshod look of it, especially the showing of the suspenders, annoyed Mama just the same. If she could wear her corset, couldn't Papa wear a collar?

He would not use a tooth brush and he did not go to a dentist till he was sixty, but his teeth were beautiful—white, regular and even—and he never had a toothache. When he was middle-aged and had stopped working in a cigar factory, he began to be careful about his clothes.

Left to Papa we would have been a messy crowd with spots on our clothes. But once in a while we would have been dressed up better than we could afford. That would not have been, like other people, on Saturdays and Sundays; it would have been on days of big winnings when Papa took us out to show us off. It is pretty hard on a woman who likes to do the proper thing when her hus-

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band, without any reason, in the middle of the week, suddenly puts on his Sunday suit. Mama saw that our clothes were always clean and that we did dress up on Saturday and Sunday. We were a little worse off than other children that way. We had to be dressed up two days instead of one.

From all this you would think that Mama had a great reverence for rich people and Papa regarded them with contempt. But it was Papa who had something like awe for people who were rich or successful. A mysterious glamour hung over them, and he would speak of them with alert wonder. This did not in the least interfere with his idea that there should be no rich people, and truly there is no logical reason why the two ideas should not live comfortably side by side. He admired people who had made a success, the more because he had a poor opinion of himself whom he considered a failure. And even more, because of that, he believed that it should be possible for everybody to make a success without bothering about money.

Mama had no such notions. She was far too much of a realist about money to think that people were any better because they had it. She wanted money so that she could buy things with it and be safe. To be sure, she had an emotional reaction about rich people, but it was just exactly the opposite of Papa's. She had some rich cousins who lived on Seventy-second Street, a few doors from Fifth Avenue, and Papa would say: "You know they like you. Why don't you go to see them some time?" What he meant was that they would probably give us children presents and perhaps lend Mama some money. Mama knew what

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he meant, and she answered what he meant rather than what he said. She said: "Why should I go to them? The children don't need their presents, and I won't borrow money. This is my house, and if they want to see me they can come here." She had a chip on her shoulder about people like that. What people had, their money or their success made them no better to Mama. She was loyal to the failures, the unhappy, and the lost.

We understood Mama well. She argued with us as though we were grown up. She played with us and complained that we were "fresh," that we "answered her back." We never "answered back" to Papa. No kinder human being ever lived. He never punished us, yet we were afraid of him. Mama often gave us a sudden push or a sudden slap. We were never afraid of her.

Mama was economical, while Papa was richly generous. Yet we never asked him for a penny to spend. Why? Because he had black, silent, gloomy moods. Because he was nervous and high-strung. We admired him almost with awe because we thought he had a marvelous mind. What he really had was an eager intelligence that had been warped by bad training into a good deal of muddle-headed thinking. He had good taste in music, and a pianist's hands. And he was without fear of any kind.

I was grown up before I knew that a few words of sympathy could drive away one of his black moods. Papa was inarticulate about himself, one of the most inarticulate people I have even seen. And one of the most lonely. He never talked about himself and I think he never thought much about what was wrong with him, but probably he blamed himself a good deal. When we were older,

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we found that we could comfort him and sometimes even laugh him out of a depression. We were astonished, all of us, to find that this terrifying gloomy Papa of our childhood was an unhappy person who needed a little reassurance.

It is a silly notion that children instinctively understand grown people. Why should they? They themselves live on the surface of life, and only surface qualities mean anything to them. Children like grown people who are jolly and lively; they like grown people with childish minds. The uncle who gives them spending money is a finer person than the one who doesn't. You can see the same thing in grown people who remain emotionally childish. The clerk who works hard for every penny in his pay envelope, and yet is grateful to the boss, is merely feeling a childish emotion. The boss takes the place of the uncle who gave him a tip.

In those days the wife was the homemaker and the husband the money-maker, and it would have been better if it had not been that way with them. Papa had no feeling for business or money except that he liked to spend it. Mama had an excellent understanding for money. She was clever at making her hats and ours, and if she had been a milliner she would have done well. But it was Papa who was supposed to own a little business, and he simply could not do it. It was Mama who could have done it, and she simply did not have the time.

CHAPTER IV

I BECOME A PERSON

I SELDOM thought of myself as an individual, as a person by myself, but always as part of the family. Most of the time I seemed not to be "me," but my mother's child, or my father's child, or my sister's sister. It was when I went to school that for the first time I became "I," and a person apart from other people. And that came about when, to my surprise, I found that there was something *I* did better than *they* did.

There is a photograph of my sister Dolly and me, taken when I was six years old and she was five. She is facing the camera with the sure confidence of a pretty girl. The corners of her mouth turn up, her wrists are dimpled, her long hair falls in round good curls. I am looking at the camera as a homely woman might look at a mirror. I am neither *dodu* nor dimpled. The corners of my mouth turn down. My hair doesn't want to curl.

They tell me that I was not a bad-looking child. But I did not have the clear blonde skin or the straight nose of Mama's family, nor was I a dark-eyed brunette. Everybody talked about how pretty Dolly was, and Jenny—even Benny had long golden curls, and a lovely nose until he broke it. But all they said about me was that I looked like Papa. And Papa had a homely Russian face. When he was an old man and his fierce eyebrows and moustache got thin, so you could see his eyes and mouth, he looked

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charming, but when he was young he looked fierce and dark. I did not look dark, but maybe I sometimes looked fierce.

Dolly had a jolly disposition and smiled easily. I smiled less easily. They said what a sweet little mouth Dolly had, and what a big mouth I had; and they meant that two ways. The children made fun of my green eyes. They yelled "green-eyes, cat's eyes," but they did not come close when they said it because they were afraid of my tongue and temper. They made me so ashamed that when at fifteen I had to wear glasses I was glad because they would hide those eyes. I paid no attention to Mama's "Don't read in that bad light. You'll spoil your eyes." And I ruined their sight. Perhaps there was a mental quirk to it—maybe deliberately, though subconsciously, I let my eyes get weak so I could wear glasses. This whole business about my eyes was foolish to the point of idiocy. My eyes were all right. They were really rather pretty. But children often seem to come near to being idiots. Neither Mama nor Papa had any suspicion of this silly thought. It is the sort of thing that children hide most carefully, and on which they build a lifelong sense of inadequacy, or, if you prefer it, of inferiority.

And then there was my quick temper. It made me think that I was a disagreeable child. I was not disagreeable, but I was ill-tempered and hard to manage. One day Dolly teased me and I threw a wooden spoon at her. She was quick; it missed her, and it smashed a window pane. That was serious—it cost money to repair the pane.

Dolly had bronchitis or pneumonia every year and had

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to have a lot of attention. I never had anything the matter with me. I can see myself lying on the couch for two or three hours one afternoon, and hearing some talk about malaria. This diagnosis must have been fantastic, since I was perfectly well again the next day. I remember no toothache, no earache, no belly-ache. I cannot remember anything about my body except that it was awkward. I was no good at athletic games; my motor reactions were too slow. And I had a way of dropping things and bumping into furniture. So I heard: "Don't be so clumsy! Did you ever see such a clumsy child!"

All during these years I was shrinking and timid, yet nobody seemed to know I felt so. I was not a pettable child. I was much readier to fight than to cry. When I did cry, it was from anger rather than from sorrow. And I was bossy. When we played school I had to be the teacher. I was a year and a half old when Tante Gustel came from Germany. She sat me up on a high table and talked to me, and at once I began to correct her German. I pointed out to her how she ought to speak. So apparently I was a cocky little child. But I did not feel cocky. I felt afraid.

I thought that almost all other children were better than I was. We wore cheaper clothes than the other children at school. Even our best dresses for Saturday and Sunday were homemade. And they were made by hand too. If you were rich enough, you had dresses made on a machine by a dressmaker. But Mama did not own a machine. And we often used to pass brownstone houses with high stoops. Private houses we called them. Rich

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people lived there—just one family to a whole house—people whose fathers made huge sums like fifty dollars a week.

Papa and Mama were always worried about money. And we knew it, all of us. It was part of our everyday thought; we breathed it in with the air, we ate it with our food, we put it on with our clothes. For weeks Mama and Papa talked and figured before one of us could get a pair of shoes. The high black button shoes children wore cost two dollars a pair. Ours were polished hard to hide how shabby they were. The polish came in a bottle. It had a sponge fastened to the cork, and I can smell it now.

I know a man who bought a painting last year for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. He lives in something like a palace, and the walls of its drawing room are hung with such paintings. He has no real interest in them; but when he was a little boy, he was so poor that he could not have even one picture on the walls, and he used to cry about that, and his mother was ashamed. His mother is dead, but he has these pictures hanging on the walls to show her what he can do and to show the world that his mother's little boy can have all the pictures he wants.

In the same way, but in a much smaller degree, I like to have more shoes than I need. Dresses and hats and underwear Mama could make, but she could not make shoes, and so it was shoes that always stood out as the thing that we could buy for money and that we seldom had money enough to buy. Shoes and the rent. The coming of rent day was a serious business. Mama would save up from the first of one month to the first of the next. Even then there was usually not quite enough and Papa

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at the last minute would get an order for fifty cigars and Mama was able to hand the landlady her fifteen dollars on the dot. Or sometimes it just was not there and one of our uncles would lend us the money. Another time they would be in the same fix and we would help them out. All of them were always owing each other money and were always paying it back. But they did not like it. They were unhappy when they had to borrow money from each other, and yet it was the only way they could manage. When Mama was eighty years old, she remarked wistfully, "Those were good days."

"But you were always so worried about money," I said, "you were so hard up."

"Well," her answer was matter-of-fact, "*sometimes* we didn't have to worry about the rent."

Our father was the only one in that house who worked in a factory. Georgie's father owned a little hat store, Millie's father made cigars at home which he sold to the Republican district club. Mama felt badly because Papa was a workingman and could not seem to climb out of it, and of course we felt what she did.

I did not have any feeling of inferiority as a Jew. To be sure, little boys in the street called us "dirty Jews," but we considered ourselves better than our Irish and German neighbors, and we were furious when those neighbors called us "dirty Jews" and "sheenies."

An Irish family shared the kitchen fire-escape with us. They were redheaded, dirty, and disorderly. Sometimes they got noisily drunk and we could hear them throwing things at each other. Naturally we looked down on them; these were the only Irish we knew—and naturally we as-

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sumed, being small children, that Irish people were always like that. And some of the Germans in the neighborhood who were not Jews were stupid, and seemed more stupid to us because they spoke an ugly Platt-Deutsch. So we came to think that the only people who hated Jews were either common or mean. I was surprised when I found that there were outwardly decent people who hated Jews.

I should have been amazed indeed in those days if I had known that millions of people hate Jews because they think all Jews are rich. A friend who grew up on an Ohio farm told me that as a child he hated Jews and Catholics. "The Catholics—that was simple," he said. "I was scared to death of the big black robes of the Catholic priests."

That reminded me of something. "I had forgotten all about it," I said, "but that's exactly the way I felt when I was a little girl. I've never thought of it from that day to this." I told him how all the children in our house were afraid of the Catholic priests in their shadowy robes and the nuns in their dull black mantles. We were not afraid that the priests or nuns would do anything to us, only there was something dark and strange about all those night-like folds. The men and women in them looked larger than life. One day a Catholic child took me to see a performance of *Pinafore* in the parish hall of her church. After that my fear went away. "But how about the Jews?" I asked him. "Why did you hate them? Were there a lot of Jews in your part of the world?"

"Not a single one," he said. "None of us had ever seen a Jew. But to us 'Jew' meant 'rich man'—we thought all Jews were rich. We thought they had all the money in

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the world and foreclosed the mortgages on the farms. It made a good alibi, you know, for the banker in our town who said it wasn't his fault, but that the big Jew bankers in New York made him foreclose. I thought that the Jews had all the money. I got over that notion all right. That was easy. As soon as I got out to the city and found out how many poor Jews there are, when I saw how many of them are in the Labor Movement, that settled my anti-Semitism right there."

"Plenty of people hate Jews just for that reason—because they're radicals."

His mouth quirked at the corner. "Any excuse'll do when you've got to do a little hating. And when you're too dumb to find out what's hurting you."

Today there is a small group of refugee German Communists in New York who have been giving a show in a cellar. One of the acts is this: A delicatessen store in Hitler's Germany. A woman comes in to buy flour and coffee. When she has paid for the flour she hasn't enough money left for coffee. The storekeeper shakes his head. "Those Jews!" he said. "They take all the money. There's none left over for other people."

"But," says the customer, "I am a Jew, and I have no money."

The act goes on. It is still a delicatessen store, but this time it is in New York. A woman comes in to buy flour and coffee, but after she has paid for the flour there isn't enough money left for coffee. The storekeeper shakes his head. "Those high wages! The workingmen take all the money. There's none left over for other people."

"But," says the woman, "my husband is a workingman,

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and I have no money."

All the Jews I knew as a child were poor. I did not know any rich ones at all. And most of them have remained poor to this day. The Gentile children whom we knew did not hate Jews for any foolish mixup about riches. They knew better. But they used to say that we had killed Christ. We did not know what they meant; they did not know either, but they believed it. It's easier to believe than to know. When I was a child I believed rich people were the source of evil, that it was their fault that we were poor—so that even today when people are rich I have to overcome this poverty snobbishness. And I am perennially surprised when I find that Jim Jones who is a rich man is just as good as Tom Brown who is poor. Before I accept him I have to say to myself, "Why, sure, Jim's all right." Just so, other people have to climb over the wall of their early feelings about Jews. And sometimes they would rather not make the climb.

Perhaps I can make clear what I mean by a silly little thing. I like Vienna rolls for breakfast. I have lived in many places and eaten many kinds of breakfast, but whenever I can get them, I prefer Vienna rolls and sweet butter with my tea. That is what we had when I was a little girl. A Vienna roll has crisp points on top. To most people it tastes no different from any other hard-baked yeast roll. But it tastes better to me. This is so unreasonable, and yet so unconquerable! If a trifle so foolish cannot be changed, how then can deep-laid hate and love be changed?

But except for word fights with children in the street none of this bothered us much when we were small children. After all, we thought of ourselves—we had been

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trained that way by Mama—as better than anybody who was not a Jew. It was a mixed feeling—not clear.

If I had owned nothing but my package of reasons for thinking myself less than the other children, I should, I am sure, have gone through life with a broken spirit. But then I went to school. And that saved me. I found out that I did one thing better than the other children, so I set both feet on that and fought. I might have been merely a sad misfit. But at school I found I had a mind. And instead of a misfit I became a rebel. Which makes me believe that rebels are made and not born.

The first day at school was not too good. Although I had been born in New York, until I was five years old I knew not one word of English. There were no kindergartens. At six I went to the primary school. Dolly began on the same day. By that time we had a few English words, but only a few. German was the language of the house. Mama and Papa spoke German to each other and to us. When we came out of school that day the other children called after us, “Dutchy, Dutchy, can’t speak muchy.” Dolly and I ran home, up the three flights of stairs and into the kitchen where Mama was putting out milk and bread for us on the table. Dolly burst into tears, and I burst into speech. “They called us Dutchy. Can’t speak muchy!”

“Never mind,” Mama said, “I’ll make you some cocoa.” She did not know what else to do about it, but when Papa came home she told him and he said, “Not another word of German will I ever speak to one of you. If all you can manage to know is one language, it better be English.” And from that day on he spoke only English

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to us. Mama kept on speaking German, but we answered her in English. These bilingual dialogues which were a matter-of-course to us sounded funny to strangers.

But soon the school turned into a scene of triumph. I could not read and I did not know how to figure, but the teacher wrote on the blackboard in white chalk "2 plus 2," and said, "How much is that?" And I was the only child in the class who knew the answer. I was astonished—no, dumfounded—to discover that Dolly couldn't do this as well as I. It never entered my head that Dolly might be hurt by this. This school victory and others like it gave me a name for such a glittering intellect that Dolly was a little shy of my great mind. I probably was pretty superior about it, and so the only way she could get even was to tease me and sometimes to be spiteful. She had to tease me to prove that she was somebody too.

It seems to me now that I must have been jealous of Benny too. He was so important because he was a boy that I had to show that I was just as good as any boy. Dolly had something of the same need, I imagine; she proved herself by becoming a tomboy; she was good as a boy in any kind of climbing or running game. I couldn't do that. So I began to compete with boys with my mind, and when I grew up I kept on by competing with men. That is why, when I was in the advertising business, most of my work was advertising to men. And that too is why I am so pleased when anyone says that I have a man's mind and a masculine directness.

This begins to sound as though all of us were more or less busy being jealous of each other. But modern psychologists say that all children are that way. There is

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often no hate in such childish jealousies, rather there is a sense of being abused and not appreciated. Children, no matter how shy they seem, are uncomfortable when another child takes away the limelight. It is not any noble instinct that makes little boys and girls hate the reciting, dancing show-off in the parlor. It is because that child is for the moment more important than they are. It seems to be a tight corner from which few children escape, and which parents can't do much about. If a child's ego is entirely satisfied with praise, then that child has a dreadful time when it grows up because it can never get enough adulation from the grown-up world; and if the child is not praised, it develops a sense of inferiority. It makes a neat problem for parents and teachers.

So many admirable people tell me that they hated to go to school that I am ashamed to confess that I loved to go. I loved even the blackboards and the chalk. And so many great men of the world did badly at school that I hesitate to say that I did well there. Out of school I was nobody, a homely piece in a good-looking family; I was no good at all at games; I was smaller than the other children of my age. But at school I was better than anybody else, so I hated vacation time and I could not wait for school to begin again.

Best of all I liked examinations because there I could, in swift and dramatic fashion, show that I was quicker and brighter than other children. The sudden emergency, the hurry and the fight of an examination—I loved all of it.

The only thing that kept the rest of them from hating me was that I was no teacher's pet. I could not keep quiet nor sit still long enough. The children with the best marks

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and the best behavior were made monitors of the class. I was never a monitor. Some of the teachers said that I was impudent, but I never could understand why. When I was grown up and began to work for a living, one of my bosses said that I was insolent, and not long ago somebody said that I was "as fresh as paint." I cannot understand these any better than I understood the teachers who called me impudent when I was a child. I really do not know what they mean. So much for understanding one's self.

Besides, there were three branches of learning in which I always did so badly that I could never be the head of any class. They were handwriting and singing and sewing. My handwriting was a series of blots. I used to hold my pen with cramped aching fingers, and sweat while I tried to form the letters. I could not learn to write the way the copybook said, and I could not turn out a neat page. In the same way I could not draw. I was not clever with my hands at all. These were serious defects. The minds of the teachers were so confused that one day one of them said to me, "I don't see how a girl as bright as you can draw so badly."

We had to sing. It was part of our work in school, and it was treated as work, not as pleasure. I could not sing in key. We liked to sing patriotic songs, that is, all except the "Star Spangled Banner," which was too hard to sing. We poured out all the force we had in us into "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," and "My Country 'Tis of Thee." We sang it "tears" instead of "'Tis." There was one place in it where tears actually came to my eyes because I thought this "land of liberty" was so "sweet."

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We all liked to march to rousing tunes. And the patriotic exercises moved me profoundly. I loved to stand up in the morning with the class and raise my hand and say, "I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the republic for which it stands." I loved the flag. It was the most beautiful in the world, and it gave me a warm comfortable feeling. Many of the children were flippant about the salute to the flag and other patriotic exercises. And isn't it odd that when these cynical ones grew up they were ardent flag wavers, while children like me who took the childhood oaths so seriously have become rebels? I suppose they were the shrewd ones, those flippant children who expected nothing; and we became rebels because we expected too much. I took seriously the almost passionate teaching of the sacredness of the American Constitution. The children who were most bored by these lessons grew up to think the Constitution is sacred.

But all in all, the public schools were much too easy for me. I never had to try. I never had to work hard. From the time I began to go to school until I left it, I never studied a lesson, so that even now I do not know how to study.

New York had poor schools in those days. When we moved to Boston the schools there were so much better that even a child could tell the difference. In the New York primary school we always had to sit with our hands crossed behind our backs. If we raised a hand to ask or to answer a question, we had to hold it stiff and still in the air. No enthusiastic waving was allowed. When we got to Boston we were delighted to find that you could wave your hand and even jump from your seat if you

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were excited about your lesson. And there were times when the whole class would crowd forward around the teacher's desk in eager interest. Such a thing was unheard of in New York public schools at that time.

But the worst thing about the schools was true both of New York and Boston, and, I am sure, of every other public school with children of the foreign born. And I think that it must be true today. The teacher made us ashamed of our foreign parents. They made us ashamed of speaking German, just as they made other children ashamed of an Irish brogue or of speaking Czech. We did our best to forget German as quickly as possible. Luckily, we could not forget it altogether. A few years later I could have perfected my German in the grammar school, but I chose French instead. The only girl in my class in the Girls Latin School in Boston who resented the French class was a French girl. She was ashamed of her French ancestry, as we were ashamed of our German.

Like all the children whom we knew we said "foist" instead of "first," and used all the other ugly New York pronunciations. Not a single teacher in a New York school ever said one word to us about it. Our education in speech came largely through ridicule. When I was thirteen, and we moved to Boston, the children there hooted at us because we said "thoid" and "boint" and "ha-alf" with a flat a. They would call after us "Ha-alf pa-ast three," just as though they had hammered down the a's. And they would say, "Were you foist or la-ast today?" This of course was unbearable, and just as the ridicule in the primary school made us learn to speak English, so now we learned to speak with a broad a and to hint at our r's in the Bos-

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ton manner.

When we moved back to New York again, after five years in Boston, our old friends found us ridiculous once more, this time because we talked with broad a's and indicated our r's. But then it was too late for another change. We did not want to anyway, but if we had been younger we probably could not have borne up against the other children. Luckily time and associations have rubbed off all local accent, whether New York or Boston, from my speech.

CHAPTER V

I BEGIN TO DOUBT

IN 1880, First Avenue in New York was a wide street, much wider than it is today. Today it is just an ordinary dismal avenue. They say that it is exactly the same size now as it was then, but in my mind lie two pictures of everything I saw as a child—one as it looked then, and one as it looked later. These lie together comfortably side by side. They have nothing to do with each other. So I insist that First Avenue then was wider—a sweeping boulevard. Down the center dashed the horse-car, drawn by two enormous horses, and ringing the gay warning bell. The opposite sidewalk was far away.

On our side of the street we lived in flats, and across the street they lived in tenements. Half the block on our side was taken up by the primary school. The other half was a row of four-story red brick houses. When these were built nobody took any time to bother about beauty or charm. They were straight, square buildings without trimming and with the doors and windows cut where they were needed—and that was all. Anybody knew at once that the houses across the street were tenements because their fronts were confused by a spider-like mess of fire escapes and ladders. Some of them were yellow brick and some were brownstone; and some were four stories and some were three. There was a general look of mix-up about them, while ours were plain if ugly. We felt much

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finer than the people across the street. A house with two families to a floor—like ours—was called a flat house, while houses where more than two families lived on a floor were called tenement or apartment houses. The words have shifted about until today an apartment house is a higher priced place than a flat house. Each flat ran clear through from front to back so that the kitchen looked out on the yard, and the parlor in front looked out on the street. The tenements did not run clear through from front to back. There were three or four to a floor. And they did not have a private toilet. Two families, and sometimes four, shared the toilet over there.

About a block away was an odd sort of house built around a courtyard which we thought mysterious and romantic. It was called "The Barracks" and ran for a whole block on the Avenue. Whether someone thought that soldiers' barracks would make a good model, or whether it was called so because it looked like barracks, I do not know. It was a series of little brick houses attached to one another, set around a hollow court. This dark and gloomy yard was paved with big gray paving stones. Out of the court led little staircases into each of the separate houses, somewhat like those at some of the colleges at Oxford. I have seen places that looked a little like "The Barracks," in London, but nothing that gave me the same sense of mystery, gloom and romance. We all thought it would be lovely to live in "The Barracks."

Across the street from us in the tenements lived the Bohemians—we had never heard the word Czech—some of them Jews and some Catholics. I doubt if I knew a single Protestant when I was a child. They were dressed

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the same as we were, of course, but were likely to go in a little more for bright pink and sky blue. And some of the women wore shawls while the women on our side of the street, except when they went to market right down the block, wore hats. Some of the women on that side of the street went to work in the factory. We knew that the Bohemians were the men and women who made the inside stuffing for the cigars. "Bunches" they were called then; "fillers," today. Just as Papa worked for the foreman in the factory, the bunch-maker worked for Papa. For fine cigars bunches were made by hand by skilled workers who got about eleven dollars a week, while the cigar makers got fifteen. Each cigar maker chose his own bunch-maker, and when he changed factories the bunch-maker went with him. There were two big cigar factories in our neighborhood and that is why so many tobacco workers lived in the block.

Least of all were the strippers—those who removed the bigger veins of the tobacco leaf before it could be used. Some of these also lived in the tenements. They were usually boys in their teens or were poor foolish creatures who could not learn other trades. You might be a pretty bright person, but if you did not work cleverly with your hands you were a poor, foolish creature in a cigar factory.

The Bohemians were mostly blond, quiet people. One of them was Annie Polacek who went to our school. She was a nice girl with straight light hair and blue eyes. One day after school Annie and I were sitting on the stoop outside her house. In the afternoon that was the sunny side of the street. I was "minding the baby." I had pushed the

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carriage across the broad avenue, looking both ways to make sure that it was safe. You heard the horse-car bell a long way off. When you wanted to catch the car, you did not stand waiting on a corner. You had time to get there before the car did. Some carts had bells too. The long string of brass bells with a dry tinkle meant the old clo's man; the big hand bell always went with hokey-pokey ice cream, a penny a slice. The vegetable and fruit peddlers had no bell. They just kept yelling, "Peaches, ten cents a basket. Potatoes, five cents a peck." The fish man blew a horn. All these you could hear and did not worry about.

The ones you had to look out for most were the drays with big gray horses that came dashing down the street without a bell or a cry or anything. It was easy when you crossed the street by yourself, but when you pushed the baby in her carriage, you had to go slow. There is an art in taking a baby carriage across the street. You don't just push it like a wheelbarrow. When you get to the edge of the sidewalk you lean on the handle so that the front wheels are raised a little. Then you hold it that way while you ease the back wheels down onto the street. Otherwise you might tip the baby right out into the gutter. Then you go across as fast as you can—walk not run—and when you reach the other side you lift the front wheels to the sidewalk, but you don't let the carriage tilt too much. And there you are. Well, we had got across and now I was here sitting in the sun with Annie, giving the willow carriage a roll once in a while, just to show that my mind was on the baby.

Although we were in the same class at school Annie

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and I had never had any talk outside before, and today for the first time we got to know each other.

I said, "What are you?"

She said, "I'm an American."

And I asked—I suppose strangely—"What nationality?"

And she answered "Bohemian." And then she said, "What are you?"

With pride I said, "American. Jewish."

Most of us had been born in the United States, but only a few of us had American-born parents. There were some children who had even been born in Europe. Most of the parents were Irish or German or Bohemian. We knew no others. No such conversation could have happened in South Carolina. The children there were either white or black, but all were Americans. Nor could it have taken place at that time in Ohio where nearly everyone had to go back several generations before Europe could be reached.

Millie and Georgie who lived in our house had American parents. They said "Yes, ma'am," and "No, sir." Mama admired it. "That sounds so nice, 'No, ma'am' and 'yes, sir.' Why can't you do that way instead of always saying 'Naw' and 'Yeah'?" We threw off the suggestion with peevish shrugs. But we really did think it was nice. We were merely too self-conscious to try it.

"Oh," said Annie, "were you born in the United States?"

"Of course." I was indignant. I had been born in the United States, and so I was better than a child who

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had been born in Europe and had come here with her parents.

"On Sixth Street," I said definitely because I knew that she would think that was better than being born on the East Side.

Like most children, we were not in the least democratic. We were divided rigidly into castes. Listen to children in an argument or quarrel, and it seems always to go like this, "I am just as good as you," or "You're no better than I am," or "My father's better than yours," or "Your father's no better than mine." These castes are finely graded and based on curious unrealities. Is it surprising that many people never grow out of them as long as they live?

So Annie and I, sitting on the stoop, settled my status in the community.

"Well, what nationality?" she asked next. She was a gentle child, and neither of us thought that there was anything rude or impolite in her questions.

"My mother's German," I answered, and then more slowly, and only because I was honest, "My father's Polish." Being of German descent was the best you could be—better than Irish or Bohemian. Except, if your mother and father had been born in America of course you felt pretty fine about that. We all knew these things about each other clearly and we found them out at once. Being Polish was no good at all.

"Of course, Papa lived in Germany mostly." Though Papa spoke German better than all Mama's brothers or sisters, with the precision of one who has learned it in

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night school and from books, and although they all looked up to him because they thought he was clever, and they thought that he had a better manner and brighter mind than they had, still there was that Polish thing and they looked down on it.

Until about 1750 Mama's part of Germany had been Poland, and now since the World War it is Poland again. When Mama was a little girl it had been German for a century, and the Jews who lived there considered themselves absolutely German. They were glad to be a part of Germany, they were careful to keep all Yiddish out of their speech and to talk pure German. The rest of the people in the Prussian village were the descendants of Polish Catholics; they considered themselves Poles and were rough people. It was from them that Mama brought into her grown-up life her strange notion that Gentiles were stupid and dirty. Anyway, Mama and her people would have been astonished if you had said that they were so near the border they might be considered Polish if only by descent. I knew none of this as a child. Germans looked down on Poles, and I thought that that was as it should be. Papa was different, but I wished he wasn't a Pole. As for Russians . . . well, one of Mama's cousins was married to a Russian, a quiet hard-working man, and all the family was polite to him.

I said as fast as I could, "My Papa and Mama didn't know each other in Europe. They met together in New York." By a fine line that made me a little more American. I said that my father had left Warsaw when he was only thirteen years old and had gone to live in Germany. I told Annie what a wonderful man my Papa was. How

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he stood on a platform and made speeches and how he knew everything, and how he was the best workingman in the shop, and how the other night when he came home he brought us pink bonbons with cocoanut inside. I said nothing about how he played the races. You did not speak about that.

Annie opened her mouth as though to ask another question when suddenly we both jumped up without a word. I grabbed the baby carriage and we started off. The music of a German band, the first one we had heard that spring, had burst out from around the corner. When we got there, we stood entranced, listening. There were four nice jolly-looking men. One had a black moustache that hung way down, and one was round and bald. That one had a cornet, and the other three had big brass things we did not know the names of, and they were playing a familiar tune. I began to sing it, and I know that I sang it off key.

*"In Lauterbach hab Ich mein Strumpf verloren
Nach Lauterbach geh Ich dahin."*

"My uncle Albert knows how to sing that fine. He sings it after he drinks some beer."

I have no idea what the band played next, but probably *Wiener Blut* or the Blue Danube. When they had finished and gathered up the pennies they started off, and we watched them regretfully because they were going farther away from home, and we knew we must not follow. We turned and walked slowly back to Annie's stoop. I straightened the baby's cover and made sure she was still asleep. Jenny was not a cry-baby, and she would not have notified me that she was awake with any baby shrieks. We sat

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down on the step, and after a while we went on with our talk. It was the first long conversation I remember having with another child. The reason I remember it is that right there, sitting on that step when I was about nine years old, I began to think for myself. My mind began to open up. It came about in this way.

Annie was telling me about Easter and the Easter holidays, and what they did in the Catholic Church on Easter. I listened uneasily—maybe I hadn't ought to hear this kind of talk, about the Catholic Church and all. Sometimes in passing I had seen the Christ on the Cross in a shop window. And I was horrified by its blood and torture. I had turned my head away and hurried on—what sort of people were these Christians who had such an awful ornament? We thought that all figures and pictures were "ornaments," used to decorate the mantelpiece or the walls. I did not realize that people used this figure in prayer, and of course I knew nothing of symbols.

Annie went on to say, "I don't go to church any more because my Mama and Papa don't believe."

This did not interest me. Anyway I was just as good. "My Papa don't believe neither." And then I showed off. "Next week is Passover," I announced.

"Well?" she asked.

"Well, we don't eat any bread or anything except matzoths."

She said, "Oh, I know what they are, big round crackers."

"They're good. I love 'em," I said.

She said, "why?" She meant why did we eat only matzoths.

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I said, "I dunno. I'll ask my Papa." Papa would know. He knew everything.

"What else do you do?"

I said, "Look! Mama cleans up everything."

"Well, don't you clean every week? Every Saturday?"

"Every Friday we clean. Saturday is the Sabbath. We're not allowed to clean the house Saturdays."

"I know," she said with envy. "Ain't you lucky? You got two Sundays every week. Saturday you have a Sunday, and Sunday you have another Sunday."

I agreed smugly and said: "Well, I don't mean that cleaning like we do every week. There are dishes on the top shelf and we take them down, and we put the other dishes on the top shelf, and then we use the dishes from the top shelf next week, only for Passover, then we put them away again."

She said, "Is it a whole week?"

And I said, "Yes."

She said, "what do you eat?"

And I said, "Ooh, grand things! Matze Clöse and pancakes and macaroni. [I meant macaroons, but I was considerably older before I knew the difference.] Next Monday is Sedar night."

"What's Sadie Night?"

"Sedar night," I corrected. "That's when we have the big dinner and Papa sings the Sedar."

She said, "Oh, does your Papa sing?"

"Oh, no, he don't sing." And in some fashion I managed to convey to her that at sundown on the eve of Passover we gathered around a table with a white tablecloth; the candles were lighted, and Papa chanted a long Pass-

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over service in Hebrew out of a book, and then we had fine things to eat. First we had apples chopped up with nuts and wine, and there was a chunk of horse-radish. But we didn't eat the horse-radish. We were supposed to, but it was bitter. And there was an egg and its shell was broken and it looked burnt.

"What for?" she asked.

"I dunno," I said. And then we had hard-boiled eggs that you shelled and put into salt water. We never ate them that way at any other time, and they were good; then fish with yellow sauce on it.

"Pike," I said. "And then chicken soup with dumplings, and then chicken. We eat so much we nearly bust."

"If your Papa don't sing what does it sound like when your Papa says it?" she asked.

"Papa reads it so fast. It's in Hebrew. My Papa can read Hebrew. He goes so fast; he gets through as quick as he can. But it takes so long and we're so hungry and we can't get anything to eat—not till it's all done. My Mama says we must behave, but we talk and laugh all the time. All the time we talk and we laugh and under the table we kick each other, and Mama keeps making faces at us to stop."

Annie said, "that's funny—your mother should let you talk and laugh like that."

"She makes faces and tells us not to," I said, "but she don't look mad. She can't help laughing herself. She tries to look mad but she can't."

"That's a funny way to do if it's your religion."

I said, "Oh, I dunno."

"Why does your father hurry so fast?"

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"Well, he don't believe in it." And then proudly, "My Papa don't believe in no religion. My Papa's an atheist. My Papa never goes to Temple. He wouldn't."

She said, "well, does your mother?"

And I said, "no, she has no time. But she's awful religious."

"But don't you ever go to Temple?"

No, I never went to any Temple or to any Sunday School, and I had no religious education or training in the usual sense. The first time I went to a Jewish Temple was when I was fourteen years old. It was in Boston and I went because my cousin had a crush on a rabbi. He was a dark and handsome young man with delicate face and intelligent head. The congregation was wealthy and all the young girls were in love with the rabbi. My cousin, who was not wealthy, had a young girl's crush, and she got me to go with her for company. I went because it was all new to me and interesting. Once in a while the rabbi would change places with the Unitarian minister from Copley Square; the sermons of both were mainly social and political.

But even when I was talking to Annie on First Avenue I knew all the Jewish ritual—how meat must be first soaked half an hour and then salted an hour so it would be "clean" to be eaten; that you must not sew or light a fire on Saturday; that you couldn't cook milk with meat—or drink milk after meat. "Thou shalt not seethe the kid in its mother's milk." I knew that outside the door of every good Jewish household there hung a mezuzah, holding the Ten Commandments. I did not know then what was in it. It looked like a round cheap piece of tin about

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as big as a peapod and it made me vaguely uncomfortable because of the angel who came at Passover.

During the Sedar service there came an instant when Papa said, "Now, everybody silent. This is when the angel comes in." It was the one serious moment of the evening for us. We would sit still and breathless in our chairs waiting in the hush. The angel would come only to a house with a mezuzah at the door. He never came to our house but for me the mezuzah was clouded by an idea both dark and fearful. And that was all I knew of religion. I had never read the Bible. At school we heard little stories from it retold, and each morning a little reading directly from the Bible. It was dull.

I told what I could of this to Annie, and she sat silent awhile. She was crocheting a piece of lace and she turned a corner for a new line, and then she said, "Well, I think it's funny. Why does your father do that Sedar at all if he don't believe in any of it?"

"My goodness," I said. "He does it just to please Mama. He does it for our sake because Mama wants us to have it."

Annie said then, and I have never forgotten it: "If he don't believe in it, I don't see how he can do it for your sake. If he ain't got no religion, I don't see how he can do it for your sake. He ought to think it was bad for you. He ought to say he wouldn't do it at all."

These thoughts were oddly grown up for such a small child as Annie Polacek. I had no answer, and so in the casual manner of children I got up and rolled the carriage back across the street. I did not like it. Annie had stuck a pin into my mind. For the first time I began to think

I BEGIN TO DOUBT

about an abstract thing, an idea.

That night I said to Papa, "Look, Papa, if you don't believe in religion, why do you do the Sedar?" He shrugged his shoulders. "Your Mama would feel bad if I didn't."

CHAPTER VI

GOING TO THE STORE

I MUST have liked food a lot, because it is the candy store and the bakery that I remember best. I can smell the hot brown sugar of the one, and the molasses mixed with pencils of the other. We knew the candy store better because we went in there all the time with our pennies to spend. And Lizzie Sebastian, the candy store's daughter, was Dolly's friend. The bakery did not have any little girl, but the bakery gave us a cookie or a big piece of spice cake when we went in to buy.

The best things they had in the candy store were the apples-on-a-stick. They cost a penny apiece. There were two kinds—molasses and red barley sugar. There was a great deal of talk among us about when to buy them; some thought they were most exciting fresh—when the candy was still almost warm. There were others who liked to wait a little longer until the coating was hard. We took bites out of each other's apples to decide which was the sourest. Dolly was lucky being friends with chunky, good-natured Lizzie Sebastian, because that was how she came to help dip the apples-on-a-stick, and got one for nothing. But in another way she was most unlucky because ice cream and chocolates made her sick.

The "prize bags" appealed to the gambling spirit. They were little sacks of paper, plumply filled with the duller candies, but they held a hidden prize—a tiny ball

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or a tiny doll. The little black licorice buttons were good to suck; they came stuck on a long sheet of paper. The peppermint sticks were good enough for babies. And there was a black gooey something called "sour tamarinds." A gob of the black conserve was stuck on a paper and you licked it off. It was my favorite.

The candy store could have been a lovely place, if it hadn't been for Mr. Sebastian. Even Lizzie and Mrs. Sebastian were afraid of Mr. Sebastian. He was a German *dikkopf* with a thick big body and a thick square head. He hated little children, and he hated Jews, and I suspect he hated nearly everything in his life. He would have been good at plowing in a field, if the plow had been heavy and out of date. Instead, his big, clumsy, thick fingers put little pieces of candy into little pieces of paper.

The Sebastians never had any company, never had any fun, never went anywhere. Their day began at four o'clock in the morning, so they could deliver the newspapers, and the store closed at ten at night. Mr. Sebastian, who did not like people, had to stand all day and listen to the shrill noisy clatter and quarrels of people, most of whom not only made the mistake of being children, but half the time made the additional mistake of being Jews.

Years later when we were living in Boston, Mr. Sebastian came there to look for a job, and he stayed with us. The little candy store had failed. He slept in the parlor and we did not charge him any board because he was a workman and out of a job and we had known him a long time. For three weeks Mr. Sebastian went about Boston looking for work. He was morose as he had always been, but he was trying hard to be pleasant, and the thing that

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astonished—no, shocked us—was his meek, almost servile manner. We remembered how he used to shout at us and order us around in the candy store, and it was dreadful to see the change.

On Second Avenue there was a much finer candy store. Some people even called it a confectionery because it kept bonbons and chocolates under a glass case. But the thing that we went there for was the big taffy counter that ran the whole length of one side of the store. From one end to the other lay spread for our selection huge pans of all kinds of flavors—molasses, cocoanut, peanut, sassafras, chocolate, peppermint.

Most of the children asked for a penny's worth of mixed taffy and then walked from tray to tray pointing to this and that while the man behind the counter chopped off each piece with a little hammer, picked up each bit of taffy from each tray, put it on a sheet of paper, took the penny, put it into the drawer and turned to the next child. All for one penny!

Boys and girls who spent their pennies for peppermint seemed to me not quite bright. Such a waste! I used always to buy sassafras taffy with my penny. I am not sure that I really liked sassafras, but hardly anybody else bought it, and I was proud of buying something different. I suppose it gave me a sense of individuality. So at the fruit stand I always bought a slice of cocoanut because hardly anybody else bought cocoanut. Another girl always bought a banana, and she was just as proud of that.

Next to the candy store came the druggist whose store smelled of hoarhound drops, licorice and cinnamon. The druggist was the big man on the block. I suppose he had to

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have a better education than anyone around, which made him important. Also he had a small beard, the only one in the neighborhood, and he had a servant, the only one on the block. All the other men we knew had a moustache, but none had a beard. Papa's moustache was big and black; he wanted to shave it off, but Mama would not let him. Maybe you didn't have any money and maybe you didn't have any rest, but if you had a husband at least he could have a moustache. A man without a moustache was no man at all. The druggist was a little fat man with a big paunch and he acted just as though he were the doctor or someone important like that. We did not like him much. We seldom went into the drug store because Mama had no faith in medicines—no soothing syrups, no cathartics for us. Dolly had to take cod liver oil, and we all were dosed with a mess of sulphur and molasses whose bad taste started off each spring. That was all. When we had a real errand at the druggist's he gave us rock candy. But then we had no special liking for rock candy.

A penny—that was the standard of spending. If Papa was working overtime, there would be a penny every day, but if Papa wasn't working, there would be no pennies, and we yowled and begged and pestered Mama. We crowded around her, Dolly and Benny and I, demanding pennies and keeping her from walking about the kitchen. That was the only thing I remember that we ever pleaded for. We knew that when we asked for a penny Mama would first say "No," because she thought she ought to, and then would give in. What good were the things we bought for our pennies?—wasted money, she said. We never asked Papa for anything twice. With Papa, the first

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no was final. It was hard for him to say no to us, and if he had to say no, he had to.

This got so fixed in my childish mind that to this day I am unable to ask for anything twice. I envy women who can plead or who can ask again when something has been refused. I know how to keep on fighting, but I don't know how to keep on asking. The world expects a woman to coax and even to wheedle when she wants anything. I know some women who cannot do so, but they have all suffered from their disability. If a woman asks for a thing only once, the world is apt to think she does not really want it much.

Sometimes Mama's cousin, Uncle Salo, would give us a nickel, and I remember once her cousin, Uncle Herman, gave Benny a quarter. They were bachelors—two mild men. Salo was smooth-faced and rosy, but Herman was thin and yellow from the cancer that killed him. They had a tiny cigar shop of their own, and two employees—Uncle Samuel and a stripper who was half an idiot. Being bachelors and in business for themselves they had more money, and nickels and bags of candy poured from them. Benny got more nickels than we did, because he was a boy and because of his long golden curls. The Irish policeman on the block often bought him a slice of watermelon or gave him a nickel or took him for a walk up and down his beat.

One time Benny stuffed a bean up his nose and it would not come out. He came running home, crying and unable to breathe. Papa was just about to take him to the doctor when Mama suddenly had a thought. She stuck some snuff under his nose and he sneezed. Out came the bean.

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Not long after that, when he had his adenoids and tonsils taken out, Mama told us it came from sniffing such queer things as beans up his nose—and we believed her.

Such operations were not so common then as now, and the house was tense the morning when Papa left for the operation, holding Benny by the hand. When he came back Benny lay in his arms, white and weak-looking. Papa laid him down on the horsehair sofa and hurried out to get a plate of ice cream from the candy store. When that appeared Benny revived a little. We stood around and watched him while he ate it. We almost never had ice cream; and this was real ice cream—not hokey-pokey. Next day we watched him again while he ate apricot cake, which was a delicacy and expensive. It almost made us think we would like to have our tonsils out. But he looked so white we could see it hurt a lot. So perhaps it wasn't worth while.

Dolly had one good way of getting pennies. She had a lovely laugh, and the neighbors would say, "Dolly, if you laugh for me, I'll give you a penny." No acting or pretense was necessary to produce the laugh.

It was breakfast and afternoon coffee that made the baker so important. We had the European breakfast of a crisp Vienna roll with sweet butter, and milk or coffee. Papa liked to eat strange Russian breakfasts—caviar, which was cheap then because there was no duty on it, or smoked salmon or sturgeon, with big white radishes dipped in salt. School was out at three o'clock and as soon as we got home there was coffee and bread and butter. *Vesper* Mama called it, and she had to have it on the

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dot every afternoon as it had always been in Germany. If company came and there was no homemade cake, we were sent to the bakery for a Krantzkuchen, a round German coffee cake with a hole in the middle, raisins and nuts inside, and sugar on top. Of course we liked baker's cake better than any homemade cake. I like Krantzkuchen even now.

On New Year's Day, Mrs. Miller, the baker lady, would send around an enormous lovely New Year's cake. She was German, and she and two or three blonde good-natured laughing women waited on us—and one man who was floury. The women all wore big white aprons. They would cut off great squares of apple cake or cheese cake or *streusel* cake for ten cents. In the summer, when fruit was cheap and the coal stove wasn't going, Mama made huge pans of peach or huckleberry cake, the flat uncovered German kind. We took it to the baker who baked it in his ovens for five cents a pan.

All I remember of the grocery store is the smell of coffee. Mama would say, "Be sure to ask for a pound of the best Mocha and Java." We bought it in the bean and at home we ground it in a wooden coffee grinder that rumbled as it turned. There was a little drawer in the grinder, and when that was full there was enough coffee for one meal. It seems to me that there is nothing so good as the taste promised by the smell of that coffee as it was being ground. It took about a minute to grind the coffee, but what bitter and passionate fights Dolly and I had about whose turn it was to do it.

Mama was pretty fussy about coffee. It was more important to her than anything else of food or drink. Al-

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though she worked hard, she ate little. On Friday, after cleaning the house and spreading new papers on the stove and the washtubs so they would stay clean, she would cook a fine chicken dinner for the Sabbath with soup and noodles and a pudding. When we had a chicken it always had to last for two meals—Friday's supper and Saturday's dinner. That was hard with four children, even though Mama always said she wasn't hungry. To make it go farther she would put a piece of soup meat with the stewing chicken so it would get a little of the flavor. Friday night we always had a white tablecloth and the Sabbath candles were lighted. Mama herself would take only a little broth or a piece of soup meat. She was a good cook by long practice and without a cookbook, but she never could taste as she cooked. She kept herself going by drinking coffee, and the coffee pot was always on the back of the stove. Perhaps that is why, although she was plump, she was never stout like so many of the other mothers whom we knew. But she liked to tell us what a good appetite she had had when she was a girl, how she would sit down at second breakfast (the ten o'clock in the morning meal in Germany) and eat half a loaf of white bread with butter and drink a glass of beer, and how stout she used to be then.

Of course the coffee did not come done up in a package. Nothing came in a package except salt. Nothing came in a can except salmon or sardines. With one twirl of his finger, the grocer made little pointed bags like a dunce's cap upside down. Into these he put your ounce of pepper or cinnamon. When you bought a pound or more of anything, it was put into a paper bag.

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And now suddenly there pops into my mind something I had forgotten. We never spoke of a quarter or of twenty-five cents. We called it two shillings. We never bought eggs by the dozen; we bought two shillings' worth. Flour and sugar were bought not by the single pound, but three and a half pounds at a time.

In the grocery store also we bought something called "cocoa shells." From this Mama made a repulsive drink that tasted faintly like cocoa. It was cheap and the only way Mama could get us to drink milk. Of course we never bought any jams or canned vegetables. Mama made her own elaborate conserve of orange peel, which we liked, and quince jam, which without exaggeration I may say we hated bitterly.

For the New Year the grocer sent us a bottle of wine. The same kind of Germans are now salesmen in the chain grocery stores in New York today. They no longer own their little shops, but work for somebody else.

On New Year's Day the beer saloon gave us a calendar, a big bright thing, the main ornament of our kitchen walls. We always called the place the "beer saloon." Little else was sold there. Sometimes there was bottled beer in the house, but usually, if it was daytime, one of us was sent to the corner for a can of beer—ten cents, if there was company—five, just for Papa and Mama. We were never sent there in the evening, and we were never allowed to taste the beer. This did not matter because we had all of us at one time or another taken a sip on the way home and did not like it. When you went for a can of beer, the round jolly German or his wife gave you a big pretzel. This seemed all right to me until I got the idea in school

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that there was something shameful about going to the saloon. So I would not go any more.

There was a butcher store downstairs in our house, but we did not trade there as they did not have kosher meat. They were two brothers, John and Otto, and were Papa's friends. The two big solid Germans played the races with him and sent him porterhouse steaks. These were from the hind quarters of the beef, and eating them was contrary to the Jewish ritual. Mama cooked them with shuddering shrinking in a special pan. This, together with a special plate and knife and fork, she kept segregated from her other dishes. Papa insisted on having the steaks cooked and eating them. It was one of his many little gestures of defiance.

Usually we had stew or meat balls or tripe or liver or lungs, or something else cheap. Of course when money was short, we did not have chicken even for the Sabbath. Monday was a bad day. That was wash day, with tiresome stew from Sunday's left-overs. On Monday Mama was busy all day with the washing—that is, all day except when she cooked breakfast and combed our hair and saw that we were dressed for school and took care of the baby and cooked farina for lunch and got supper ready. She used to say proudly that not one drop of water from her huge washing ever fell on her gingham apron—and it did not either. She did not even get her apron wet when she scrubbed the floor. But on wash day Mama was sure to be cross, and the house was full of steam and we had to help with the baby when we got home from school, and late in the afternoon the big ironing board stood across the middle of the kitchen floor.

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The wash lines were strung through pulleys at the kitchen window and across the back yard to a tall pole. Mama was always glad to get out on the fire escape and hang up the wash, even though the sun turned the iron railings so hot she could not touch them, or even though they were coated with the ice of winter. She said she felt suddenly free, as though she were getting away from her troubles. I too liked to stand on the fire escape and spread the white, fresh smelling clothes along the line, fasten them with clothespins, and then send them flying off into space. Flying like great white flags in the wind. On cold winter days they froze and then only Mama was strong enough to get them off. Even now when I hear the squeak of a pulley, no matter where I am, I see the white of the clothes crumpled by soap and hot water and I smell the fresh odor of clean linen. It smelled good when it was ironed, but not as good as when the great fluffy mounds lay in the wicker basket fresh from outdoors.

There was not a single store around which sold anything pretty. The only things except food that I liked to look at or to feel were pencil boxes and notebooks. They were grand. Mr. Sebastian sold such things, but we bought them there only when we needed them in a hurry. Twice a year, before the opening of the school session, we had an important shopping day. With ten cents or so that Mama had given each of us, we went to a stationery store on Third Avenue near Sixty-eighth Street. This was my favorite store in the world. It was full of lovely feelings and smells. We would buy a pen, a pencil, an eraser (a rubber we called it), a pad, a notebook. Our notebooks

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and pads cost only a penny or two. Your wealth was indicated by the quality of your notebooks, but even more by the splendor of your pencil box. No matter what else we gave up, we would save our pennies for that. Usually we had one made of plain wood, but once or twice we got presents of pencil boxes made of black lacquer. Nothing we owned gave us more pride or pleasure. It was fine to hear the snap as they opened and shut. They smelled good too.

At home there was always one rather purply looking bottle of ink, usually dried out, and we had a wonderful iron inkstand. It had two glass inkwells and a place for pens, and in the middle between the inkwells there was an entrancing calendar. You turned a screw and the day and month and year all appeared in white letters. Mama used this as an ornament on the kitchen mantelpiece. The inkwells were always empty.

When anything had to be written in ink there was a pretty to-do in the house. Papa kept his racing records in pencil, but once in a while a letter had to be written to Grandma in Warsaw or Grandfather in Germany. And once in a while a report had to be signed, or a post card sent out, or a letter written to Uncle Max, or Uncle Bernhard. And then searching began. The pen was always rusty and probably the ink in the ink bottle was dried up, and there was never a blotter in the house. One of us had to dash over to Mrs. Trueheart to borrow her ink or down to the store for a fresh bottle for five cents. After Papa finished writing each page he would wave it until it dried and then turn it over. The ink always had a rusty purplish

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color and the pen sputtered as it ran over the paper.

I dimly see other stores in my mind, but aside from the stationery store, only the candy store and the bakery had any interest for me.

CHAPTER VII

TANTE BERTA

SOMETIMES on a Friday I used to go to the Ghetto with my aunt. We did not call it the Ghetto. We had never heard the word. We called it the East Side. Every Friday the year round Tante Berta went down to Hester Street, or Broome Street, to buy chickens or geese and fish for the Sabbath. And sometimes, when there was no school, I went with her.

I wanted to tell about one such trip in this book—and I began to write about the mean streets of the East Side as they really are. But in the middle of the chapter, I went to bed and to sleep, and I had a dream. In the dream I was once more down in Hester Street with Tante Berta. And I said to myself, "Dear me, I did not write about this properly at all today. It is much more vivid. All the colors here are much brighter. What made me think that these streets were narrow and crooked? This is a wide-spaced avenue."

Everything in the dream stood out with a sharp and preternatural brightness. I saw it so plainly. Instead of the narrow higgledy-piggledy streets of reality there was one comfortable wide avenue. Down the middle was a row of stalls and on them were all kinds of gold and green fruits and brilliant red vegetables like glorified tomatoes. All the vegetables looked round and gay in color, more like a pile of gaily colored Mexican gourds.

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All the people waiting on us at the stalls were bright, too, and their faces were round and red like apples, and they were all smiling. "Now," I thought, "that is not the way I've told about it at all. I must get up tomorrow and write about the way it is in this dream."

Hester Street and Broome Street and Orchard Street were not wide and bright, but cluttered and gray. Fire-escapes hung over the sidewalks and they were messy with featherbeds and pillows and blankets and babies' diapers and what John Reed once called "the short and simple flannels of the poor." But the dream probably shows how the place looked to my childish mind—or perhaps childish soul would be better. The glittering splendor and the round red fruits and the jolly faces do not mean that I really thought as a child that they looked as fine as that. But they stood in my mind for the vividness of adventure that I got from going down there.

Mama would not go down to the Ghetto at all. She seldom went marketing anyway. Once when she went to the grocer's he said he thought she had moved away because it had been six weeks since he had seen her. She would not go out to a store on our own block in a house dress or without a hat. She had to get all dressed up, and that meant even a veil, but she could not stop in the middle of making gravy to put on her hat, coat and veil. Tante Berta had no such notions, and we always wore our worst clothes to go downtown to market. We didn't want to spoil our good things with the bundles. And besides, if we were nicely dressed, we would have to pay more for everything.

Tante Berta was fat and jolly and quite the homeliest

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person in the whole family of relatives. Her little reddish-brown eyes had a swimmy look. They, as well as her fat body, always seemed to be shaking with laughter. She had a little moustache on her upper lip, and surely she did not have to pull her thin hair quite so tight into its skimpy bun! She was talkative and knew all the gossip, and was glad to tell it—with a lively malice. I thought how fat she was and how jolly and how homely, and I never dreamed then that underneath lay a capacity for passionate hate and passionate love greater than I have ever seen in my grown-up life.

From those trips with Tante Berta I acquired virtue in a large way. Benny liked to go. He said that Tante Berta always bought him a big pretzel as soon as they got down there. But he was too little to go often, and Dolly would not go at all. She was, like Mama, careful of how she looked. Everybody thought that I was a dutiful child to be willing to tag along and carry bundles. The truth was that I loved it and looked forward to each trip with excitement. It seems strange that I never told anybody how I really felt, but I was ashamed of my liking. Mama looked down on the East Side with its dirty, crowded streets. The people were noisy and common, she thought; they haggled about money; they gossiped; they went without corsets and without hats; they spoke Yiddish instead of German. All of these things she disliked. But in Mama's eyes I believe they owned a sin greater than any of these, and that was gusto. Mama was afraid of gusto.

Though her love for us was driven by the powerful force of a passionate nature, forced into deep and nar-

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row channels, yet after we were three years old she never caressed us or called us pet names. The affectionate manner of the Russians and Poles offended her.

Tante Berta was not that way at all; she was gushy, and I suspect ribald when no children were around. Yiddish words would be mixed with her German, and her house was none too clean. She was Mama's own cousin, as well as her sister-in-law, and the rest of the family wondered how she became the way she was.

My aunt and I would take the elevated train at Second Avenue and Seventy-second Street, and that in itself was a big event. The steam engine pulled the train into the station, spouting just enough terror with its smoke to make it an adventure. Then if you got a cross seat you rode down on the high road like a queen looking over the world below. When we got downtown Tante Berta would start briskly and jovially on her errands. She knew all the storekeepers—women in aprons—fat women always sitting down, fat women sitting on chairs plucking geese, fat men with red faces cleaning fish. Tante Berta would have an exciting fight with them about each single thing she bought. They abused each other roundly and had a noisy good time.

There was always a wind blowing down the narrow street and the air was full of goose feathers, soft fine feathers from the breasts of geese that fell on the heads of people and on their black coats green with age. The women always looked stuffed because they wore two or three skirts and two or three coats on top of them, and over all of them a big blue checked apron on which they laid the geese and the chickens while they plucked them.

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"Feel that," they would say, and smack the goose on the breast. "See how hard and solid it is. And look how yellow. Plenty of fat there." Or a man stuffed in a lot of clothes with a dirty white apron over all of them would wave the bloody knife with which he was cleaning a fish and say, "Here's a fine fish for you." And he would pick up a big pike and show its gills to Tante Berta. "See how red they are. That's fresh fish, I tell you." And Tante Berta would look closely and say: "Well, yes, it's all right, but it's too dear for me. You can eat that yourself on the money you make out of me."

"Well," he would say, "of course if you just want something good for gefülte fish, here's a nice white-fish, and cheap." Tante Berta usually took both, but not until after considerable discussion.

Once in a while, on the day before a holiday, Papa would go along with us, and he had a good time, too. Papa was proud of his ability at haggling. But Tante Berta regarded his efforts with tolerant scorn, and would frown at him and make him keep quiet.

"You," she said, "you give them too much. These people have more money than you have."

When Papa went along it was always a goose and not a chicken that was bought, and it was always the most expensive fish—pike or live carp. Then we would go home and tell stories of how each thing was bought. Mama would be glad to have the extra treats for so little money, but she would shake her head condescendingly and say, "I don't see how she can do it."

Tante Berta was surrounded always by hordes of poor people, poorer than herself, whom she helped out. It was

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Tante Berta who gathered together our clothes that were finally too shabby or too small for us and gave them to still poorer people. It was Tante Berta who gathered extra food for somebody who was out of work. There was one family that she seemed to sustain altogether, partly by gifts like this and partly by cheerful encouragement—a hapless little man, weakly thin, a sort of watery blond, with a bony small wife who always seemed slightly bent in eager civility, not physically bent, but her head bowed forward as though she were anxious with a foolish smile to thank you for what you did and to apologize for being so poor and so helpless. They had five children and the man was out of work most of the time. A helpless, pitiable—and because of their servility—annoying family. But everybody knew that nothing could be done about it except to go right on helping them out. Not long ago I heard an interesting story about the way they came out. All the children grew up, and one of them became a successful movie director in Hollywood. Like a dutiful son, he sent for his mother and father to come out there and live in Paradise. He had supported them in New York but he wanted them near him in the sunshine. So he bought them a house and set them up out there. And within six months the little father died out of pure loneliness for New York.

With all her kindness Tante Berta mixed liberal doses of malice. She liked to talk about people, and gossip is pretty dull unless it is malicious. She was married to my Uncle Samuel who seemed to me the loveliest, kindest, most serene person that I knew. His air of ironic detachment, which was so comforting to me, did not always

TANTE BERTA

please his sister, Tante Gustel, who used to say, "Oh, no, he's too sarcastic."

Tante Berta had several children to whom she was devoted. But there was one person whom she loved more than she loved her husband or her children. And that was her brother. She would have denied this if anyone had told her so. She probably did not know that she cared more for him than for anybody else, but it was quite clear from her actions. He was much younger than she and she had brought him up from the time she was herself just a young girl. When he got to be about thirty years old, it seemed to these orthodox Jewish people that he ought to be married. In this she joined, probably from a sense of duty. And not only that, but she set out to find him a wife. She went about it in the old-fashioned Jewish way by calling in a marriage broker. There was talk about how much money "she" had and whether "she" was too old and whether "she" was ugly. Finally, a woman with a small dowry was found. She had an old-fashioned lady's education in French and German. A fragile woman and not fitted for the world of hard physical labor into which she married. Unable to get out of that world she took refuge in ill-health and complaining. She was a stranger in a close-knit narrow family. Tante Berta acted as her friend and guide, but it was plain enough that she did not like the stranger who had taken her brother. And when Tante Berta's brother died and this woman still remained alive she could not bear it. The widow was sick and helpless. There was a small store and something had to be done about it, and Tante Berta's husband helped her out and advised her. The homely woman who was so fat that she

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shook like jelly thought this hardly necessary.

One day Tante Berta went down to Hester Street alone. She had finished all her marketing, and then with her arms filled with bundles, she lifted a big bag at the trolley-car driver to make him stop. A goose was sticking its head out of a bag, and the package of fish was a little wet. She started heavily to climb the step to get in, when suddenly she threw out her hands; the packages all dropped and rolled about the street. A stroke of apoplexy was what they said—and my jolly fat unhappy aunt never went to market again.

CHAPTER VIII

WINE FLOWER

THE children I knew had too little freedom. Indeed, it seems to me that we had no freedom at all. We were watched and guarded far too closely, and we used to envy children who lived in the country and who could run about in wide spaces.

If there is to be any sort of orderly life for city children, rigid discipline has to begin early. In the country a woman can put a little shirt, or nothing at all, on her babies and leave them out in the yard to play. Nobody is likely to see them. But even as babies, when we went out we had to be all dressed up; and as children we had to put on a clean dress and an apron, and our hair had to be brushed and tied with a ribbon before we were allowed to go out in the street. Some children on the block came out with straggly hair and dirty aprons, but we were not allowed to play with them.

Every moment of the day our mothers knew exactly where we were. I am filled with wonder when I think of these hard-working women. Every woman in the house did all her own cleaning and cooking, and some like Mama, their own dressmaking. Their hands were busy mechanically with work, while their minds darted in all directions with their children. While Mama polished the teakettle until she could see her face in it, she knew that I was reading on the doorstep and that Dolly was play-

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ing tag and that the baby was sleeping in her carriage and that Benny's voice sounded as though he were getting into a fight. Polishing rag in hand, she would come to the parlor window and call down shrilly to the street. "Benny, come right up. This minute. Do you hear me? I'm not going to call you again." It was the sort of cry that rang from the windows of all the houses pretty often after three o'clock when school was out.

Another thing; our lives were too regular. These women were so busy that the only way they could get their work done was through the practice of a set regularity. Children had to get up at a fixed hour every morning. Sundays, no later than other days. And we had to eat our meals promptly and without lingering. There was no table conversation. For one thing, Mama was in a hurry, and, for another, Papa got nervous when the children all talked at once. But keeping still was almost impossible, so Mama invented a game for us. Each meal she would start a contest to see which one of us could keep silent longest. Maybe we saw through this game but we enjoyed it anyway. It was a trick that worked. Dinner came exactly as the clock struck twelve, and supper exactly at six. And we had to go to bed promptly, and no fooling around.

Mama's calendar of work was rigid. There were certain things she did in the morning and others she did in the afternoon. If by an accident a morning job lapped over into the afternoon she was disorganized for days. Washing was done on Monday and ironing on Tuesday, sewing on Wednesday, cleaning the bedrooms on Thursday, and cleaning the kitchen and the parlor on Friday.

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Any change in this schedule upset everything and could be excused only by sickness or a holy day.

On winter evenings we were not allowed to go out after dark at all. After our early supper we amused ourselves as well as we could until bedtime at half past eight. If there was company, we sat around and listened eagerly to all the talk. Once in a while when Papa had a lot of work to do we helped him by stripping tobacco, taking out the larger veins of the leaves. We would sit around in a circle on the floor and work and talk. But that seldom happened.

We did not have any games or toys. We had ninepins but were not allowed to play with them in the evening. Indeed, I don't know when we *were* allowed to play with them, because the neighbor below didn't like the noise of the rolling balls.

We had little penny pipes to blow soap bubbles, and we had jackstones. Jacks was the favorite game of all the girls. We had a big hobby-horse and three picture books. Two of them belonged to all of us. One showed a lot of people who looked like frogs, and the other was a Brownie book. The third was my own book, the first I ever owned, and the only one until I was fifteen years old. It was *Stanley in Africa*—a child's edition in large type with big pictures. Aside from that I read the newspapers or any kind of printed matter I could put my hands on. I enjoyed it more because often it was forbidden. There were the cheap Laura Jean Libby stories that appeared in weekly installments. They were printed in the size and form of a newspaper with very black big line drawings. The heroine was always a girl who worked in a factory or a store and she always married an enor-

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mously rich good young man after going through terrible dangers fighting off somebody who wanted her body. What that meant I had no idea, so I skipped it. The first page of each installment was put in the letter-box in the hall to induce you to buy the rest. I tried always to get to the letter-box early, slip out the Laura Jean Libby advertisement, hide it under my apron and read it secretly. I kept this up for years, and Mama never suspected it.

I badly wanted a toy blackboard and white chalk so that I could play school and be a teacher properly. Dolly wanted nothing at all; she was a happy tomboy, so if she had wished for anything, it would have been extra arms and legs to climb with. Benny wanted a tool chest, and Jenny wanted a real wax doll. Papa wanted a piano, and Mama wanted a sewing machine. The piano came when I was twenty years old, and it was too late. It was Mama who first got what she wanted, and naturally, since her sewing machine was the only practical dream of the lot. She got a New Home sewing machine—thirty dollars, paid off at fifty cents a week. But we all managed to do well enough without these toys. It seemed to make little difference. We managed to fill our winter evenings and be amused. We had a set of dominoes and broken decks of cards with which we played casino and a foolish kind of poker, making our bets with chocolate pennies if we had them or with toothpicks if we hadn't. With these and the marbles, with guessing riddles and arguing, we passed the time to half past eight when we had to go to bed. The other children did not have a lot of toys either, although most of them had more than we did.

We had many other children to play with, and that

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kept us busy. In the house there were five children of my age, three of Benny's age, and three babies. This was plenty to play school with, or to play house. "Let's make believe I'm your mother," one girl would say.

"No, I want to play mother," said another (usually I).

"But you were mother yesterday."

"I don't care—I'm going to be mother."

"I don't care," though perhaps not logical, was the final argument to which there was no answer. And it has remained with me so that today when I argue about something I have a foolish way of saying "I don't care" that infuriates my friends.

There were plenty of other games we could play with each other without tools or toys. Perhaps that is why all those children stand and walk and talk so vividly in my mind, much more vividly than people whom I knew later. There was Millie, the tall energetic jolly girl who would have been handsome if her face had not been scarred by burns when she was a baby. And Georgie, a stocky solid boy with dark eyes who was quite the best-looking boy in the block. He knew it, and he considered himself an all-round special person. He used to pull our braids and chase us up and down stairs. Once he chased us clear up the three flights of stairs till we reached our floor. There was nothing left but the iron ladder to the roof. So Dolly and I hurriedly scrambled up its rungs, only to find that the trapdoor to the roof was locked. And there we hung helpless while Georgie, in a strategic position, kept on pulling our braids until various mothers came running out to see what the noise was about.

And there was little Josey with the freckles and red-

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dish hair, who was funny and made us laugh. I learned the other day that he has been divorced three times. And there was Daisy who died—that was the first time I ever heard of death. We saw nothing of it and heard little, but I smelled the lilies through the closed door and I do not like the odor of white lilies even now—nor of other white flowers—magnolia and gardenias and narcissus which smell much the same, but more so.

And then there were two babies whose mother was a "lady." She was the only "lady" in our house. She would not step out of doors without gloves. Her husband was a peddler of fruits and vegetables who came around in a wagon with a gray horse and yelled in a hoarse voice "Potatoes and apples—five cents a pail. Beets, turnips, carrots—five cents a bunch." Only a peddler, a pathetic tall gangling creature. They were poor Jews. He had been born in Poughkeepsie, and she—the tall thin woman—came from Canada, and she brought from there a broad English accent which we thought was elegant. She said "awrange," not "orrange" the way we did. When the other mothers in the house wanted to call their children they opened a window and yelled out their names. But this lady would do nothing like that. Instead she had a little bell which she rang out of her window. Once as I passed the door, I saw tears in her eyes, and she turned away to hide them. She was a sad, gentle and silent woman, and I don't wonder.

While we sat and played our game at our little red table, Mama and Papa, if he was at home, would be at the other end of the kitchen. Papa might be figuring out his racing sheets, or he might be lying on the horsehair

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couch reading the paper. He read it thoroughly, especially the political news, and sometimes he read it aloud to us. Mama would sit and sew in one of the stiff wooden chairs that she liked. She had corns on her feet that hurt her, and she would sit on the straight chair with her feet in a pail of hot water, sewing. But on Friday nights and on Saturdays, she would read either the *Gartenlaube*, a German woman's magazine with a lot of mawkish fiction, or a New York German newspaper. This paper had a Sunday supplement with a serial story. She saved these supplements carefully in a drawer, for holidays, when she would have time to catch up on her reading. Or Papa would have friends in, and they would play pinochle and, once a week, penny ante poker.

In the summer time, when parents sat in front of the door to get a breath of air, we were allowed to play on the sidewalk until nine o'clock. We played the usual childish ring games, and most of the time something which I remember as "Water, Water, Wine Flower." I loved these games on summer evenings. They seemed to me much nicer than the same games played at any other time. I can still hear us singing:

"Water, water, *wine* flower,
Growing up so *high*.
We are all *young* ladies
And we are *sure* to die.
Excepting *Dolly* Rosen.
She is the *fairest* flower.
Fie, fie, fie for shame,
Turn your back and
Tell your beau's name."

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And then Dolly or one of us would turn her back and circle in reverse, her face hidden, whispering the name of some boy. As we all knew the same little boys and did not find them exciting, sometimes a girl, instead of naming a boy, would say "the king" or "the prince." Then we would sing:

"The king, oh, the king is a nice young man.
He comes to the door with his hat in his hand.
He gives her a kiss and shows her a ring.
Tomorrow, tomorrow, the wedding will begin."

Wine flower was wrong, of course. It should have been wild flower. But wine flower was the way we sang it. I thought it was a kind of flower from which you made wine. For me, the whole scene is shot with color and magic. I have seen that house since, and it is a dismal looking, three-story brick flat. And I have seen little children playing Ring-Around-a-Rosy on summer nights on New York Streets. They make only a little scratching noise, and they look straggly and dreary, but I know they don't feel that way because in my memory I feel so gay and bright. To us it was lovely, and our voices were sweet and the song was nice, and each little girl was chosen in turn to be the wine flower.

Naturally we played Tag and Prisoners' Base, and Blindman's Buff, and Hop-scotch which we called Pottsy, and all such games as need no paraphernalia. London Bridge was the only singing game the boys would play with us. They liked the tug-of-war that came at the end of it. In the course of London Bridge each player has a wish, and our wishes showed how narrow were our lives

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and our knowledge. One child would say, "I want a dress all trimmed with silver." And then a little boy would say, "I want a house all filled with gold." And the third child would say desperately, "Oh, I want a house all trimmed with silver and gold and diamonds." This left the fourth child in something of a hole, as we did not know the names of any other precious stones and could think of no wishes aside from these material heavens.

The boys played baseball, and we made kites out of newspapers. We would spend hours making the kites and they simply never flew. We did not put on any little plays; the nearest thing to a play was the game, "Statues." But we played school a good deal, and keeping store. We knew few fairy tales and no children's rhymes, but we had a large and powerful set of superstitions. One was that it was bad luck to step on a crack in the paving stones. We probably missed a good deal of excitement in the world by keeping our eyes on the big paving stones in the sidewalk so that we would be sure to step over the cracks. And we had a compulsion neurosis that made us tap every single bar of a railing with a stick as we went by. We had all the usual superstitions about the number 13, and walking under a ladder, and breaking a mirror. If you sneezed it was good luck, if you dropped a fork there was a lady guest coming, and if a knife a gentleman was coming to call. And Mama said that if the left side of your nose itched, you were going to get good news, and if the right side itched you were going to get bad news.

Rather often on rainy days we said, "Mama, what will we do?" and Mama's answer was usually "Go away and let me alone." This was entirely rhetorical because we

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were not allowed to go away on rainy days.

But altogether it seems to me that the games and amusements we had were dry and arid. The more imaginative colorful games were absent. We did not play circus. We did not have any paints. We had no fields or rivers or streams in which to build dams, no trees to hide in. The most exciting places to climb were the iron rods outside the butcher shop on which in the daytime meat was hung, and the nicest place to sit was the rack outside the hardware store. In the daytime Mr. Freundlich, who was a kind nice man, kept the china and saucepans out there on show, but on summer evenings the store was dark. Then the rack stood empty and we found an odd joy in roosting in rows like chickens on its shelves. We would sit there and quarrel:

“You’re another!”

“Tattletale!”

“I’m as good as you are!”

“All right, I dare you!”

Or we would sing in a fighting chorus. The boys sang “What are little girls made out of? Sissy and sassy and not-a-thing nice,” while we tried to drown them out with “What are little boys made out of? Toads and snails and puppy dog tails.”

CHAPTER IX

HOLIDAYS

ONCE we had a Christmas tree. That was the time we had a German boarder, a Gentile. Mama thought a Christmas tree a dreadful sin, but she was kind-hearted, and when the boarder said, "I'll feel home-sick without a Christmas tree," she weakened. It was pretty daring and desperate to have a symbol of Christ in the house. But when he said the children would love it, she gave in. That was the time we got the hobby horse. The German boarder gave it to us. It was a huge hobby horse—taller than any of us, the finest toy we ever owned. We rode on it by the hour. It was white with black spots; it had a red saddle and a red rocker, and a long real-hair tail.

And once we went to the theater, all of us. Little Mr. Fisher came down from Boston, and he took us—Mama and Papa and all the children—to the theater. The only part I remember is the Lilliputian who sang "Ach, du lieber Augustine." I suppose I have forgotten the rest because it was a kind of vaudeville and had no story, and nothing made a dent on my mind except these little people, littler than I was, who yet were grown-up men and women.

In the middle of the performance, Mama suddenly caught her breath. We turned and looked at her. She was pale with shock. "The chicken," she gasped. She had put a chicken in the oven, and in the excitement of going

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to the theater had forgotten it. When we got back it had been burnt to a crisp. A dreadful catastrophe for such a careful housekeeper.

We had only one other boarder. Mr. Kosman lived with us for about two years, with his little boy named Willie, and we were fond of both of them. They were gentle quiet people. Mama, too, thought that he was very nice but she never called him anything but Mr. Kosman, and Papa did not call him by his first name either. He had a violin and would play and sing for us,

“Ein Neues Jahr. ist angefangen.
Der liebe Gott hat's uns geschenkt.”

I have not been able to find anyone who knows this song, and I should like to find it. I could tell you the rhythm of the song, but not the tune which I remember but cannot sing right. I am thinking one tune, but my voice is singing something quite different.

For a little while we belonged to a dancing class. It was ten cents for each lesson for each of us. There we were taught a stiff hoppy one-two-three step which was called Learning to Waltz. The teacher would say, “Right foot forward, left foot up, *hup*. Right foot forward, left foot up, *hup*.” It kept me from waltzing properly for a good many years. We had to give it up because it was too expensive.

From my memory I draw a dim picture of Tante Gustel's wedding. I see myself in the doorway between Mama's bedroom and the parlor. The wardrobe door stands open, and Mama's bustle is hanging on a hook. I think by that time bustles had gone out of style; I am

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not sure I ever saw Mama wearing one. I was four years old. Mama had just put a new dress on me that she had cut down from her own wedding dress. It was dark blue taffeta, stiff and heavy, and its short skirt stood out all around, wide in every direction. I was proud, and kept turning about to show Mama how I looked. When we got to the wedding the bride was sitting in a room with all the other women. Good Jewesses were supposed to be segregated among the women until the moment of ceremony. I have a flash of people dancing—the German waltz and a Polish peasant dance, the dancers crouching down with bent knees and leaping about the ground. And I see a carafe of red wine surrounded by thin glasses. Each of these pictures is merely a flash and is apart from the others.

There were never any parties at home for the older children. Each mother felt that she had had enough noise and enough work as her regular portion. But several times we went to a May Party. The May Party was a poor children's festival in and around New York and, as far as I know, nowhere else in this country. It was always on a Saturday and as it was likely to be raining three out of the five Saturdays in May, the May Party was carried on into June, but then you called it a June Walk. Of course it was a New York descendant of the old English May Day festival.

There are May Parties in New York today, but they seem to be huge public gatherings of a thousand children or more, organized by some Democratic Club to get votes, or they are run by charitable or semi-charitable organizations. Ours were not like that. There was no or-

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ganization about them. They were spontaneous little neighborhood parties that grew out of our need, because we had no way to have a party at home.

Some mother who had only one child and so had the time to spare usually got up the May Party and invited the other children. On a Saturday morning we would get dressed up in gay clothes, form into a little parade, and march to Central Park or to some other park. We always went to a nearby park so we could walk all the way, because carfare for a family of children and their mother came to too much money.

The big thing in the parade was a Maypole. It was wound about with strips of colored paper or cheap cloth gaily striped in colors. Holding the Maypole and looking important and beautiful under its streamers, marched the King and Queen of the May. The Queen was a girl dressed in white with a long veil and a crown of paper flowers. The King was a little boy with a gold paper crown. In a small May Party every child held one of the streamers tied to the pole; but in the bigger May Parties only a few pets held the streamers. The boys who held the streamers were dressed in page's costumes, and the girls had crowns of flowers on their heads and fluffy dresses. Our mothers followed, bringing along lunch, and everyone chipped in for a freezer of ice cream. It was always a Dutch treat.

We marched to the park behind the Maypole, but we never danced around it after we got there. We merely stuck it into the big lawn near Sixty-sixth Street and then played about. This enormous lawn was dotted all over with different May Parties, and you could recognize your

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own at a distance by your Maypole.

Once our May Party was right close to the by-path that runs across the park at Sixty-fifth Street. It was a cloudy day and the party had lasted too long. It was getting toward evening and darkness, and another girl and I who had become bored set out to see what we could discover. We found ourselves walking down a flight of steps into the by-path, and suddenly the park had disappeared. All we saw were gray stone walls. Just then, in perfect innocence, a Chinaman came walking along, hurrying on his busy way, his hands tucked in the long blue sleeves of his cotton coat. The closing in of the stone walls of the tunnel, the late light, the clouds and the Chinaman—it was too much all at once. We fell into a panic and flew back up the stairs and only breathed easily after we stepped back onto the grass of the park. We were afraid of Chinamen. They owned all the laundries, and their places smelt queer, and we all believed that they ate rats and mice.

One of our May Parties was a stupendous event. The mother who arranged it was a good organizer and she got a hundred children together. That time we had a real parade with a hired band. The King and Queen were only a small part of our grandeur. Marching ahead of them came Columbia, dressed up in red, white and blue, and with her walked Uncle Sam with a false beard. Eight Liberty girls all in a row came next. Dolly and I were Liberty girls. We had red, white and blue mortar-board hats, and Mama was busy for a week making our cheese-cloth dresses and sashes. Most amazing and magnificent, we had leading the parade a Shetland pony. When we

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got to the park all other May Parties stopped eating and playing while they stared and envied us. For days before hand we talked about the May Parties. Those Saturday mornings we got up at the first peep of light, looking anxiously to see whether the sun was going to come out. We got to be as expert as farmers about the meaning of early morning mists and winds and evening-before rosy sunsets.

Mama was up early to get the lunch ready, making sandwiches of smoked salmon and sturgeon, boiling eggs with caraway seeds, which we liked much better than ordinary picnic eggs. The eggs are boiled as usual, but just before they are ready, the shell of each egg is cracked a little and a handful of caraway seeds is thrown into the water.

We all hurried up and washed the dishes and made the beds and swept and dusted, and by the time we started Mama was ready to have a rest instead of walking to the park.

We had no organized games. We never mixed with other May Parties after we got to the park. But we played among ourselves the same sort of games we played in the street—Tag and Hide-and-Seek, and such games.

Parks were a big thing with us anyway. Sometimes on Thursday night Mama and Papa and all of us went to Eighty-fourth Street and the East River to what is now Carl Schurz Park. It was then a simple place without a name, climbing down a little hill to the river, and was popping full of Germans from the Yorktown section come to listen to the little German band that sat in the round bandstand and played a concert. Some of our uncles and aunts

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and cousins were always there and we had a special bench where we met.

There were no Boy Scouts, nor Girl Scouts, nor were there any settlement houses. But if there had been we would not have joined them. We were not joiners by temperament. Some of the other children went to the Sabbath School at the Jewish Temple on Sixty-eighth Street. They went because there were parties and they got nice things to eat for nothing, and sometimes there were classes. We tried it once and did not like it. Mama and Papa were not good joiners either. The only thing they belonged to, aside from the Labor Union, was a small society made up of people from Mama's home town in Germany. Almost every European community has its Benevolent Society in America. Emigrants from the home town and their families form a little lodge for company's sake, and to help each other out in time of sickness and death. I don't know what most immigrants in America would have done without these groups. The members of Mama's society were all poor, but once in a while they had parties where they danced and drank beer. For years Papa was its president although he was a member only by marriage. As the children of their members grew up, or the parents became prosperous, the little clubs sometimes grew big, too, and have become permanent groups in American life. Some of them keep on when none of their members can any longer speak the original language of the lodge.

There were two big holidays for children in New York. One was Hallowe'en, and the other was Thanksgiving Day. Since we could have no parties at home, the celebrations had to be in the street. This put them out of

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bounds for the girls. On Hallowe'en the boys put their coats on inside out, filled an old stocking with flour and went about in gangs, hitting each other wherever they could, on the head if possible. I can understand why the boys thought this great fun, but where the custom arose and what it meant I have no idea.

On Thanksgiving Day boys dressed up in their mothers' and sisters' old clothes, or if they could not get any would merely turn their own coats inside out, and then go up and down the streets and yards singing little songs, or flatly begging for money. Once in a while a tomboy girl would join the boys. We were never allowed to do so. Even Benny could not do it except on the sly. But all of us had paper false faces. The candy-store windows would be full of them. They were nearly always pink, and after we had worn them awhile they got all wet and messy around the mouth. We never talked about masquerading on Thanksgiving Day. We called it playing ragamuffin. After I got to the grammar school I was sure that this must be wrong and I was careful to pronounce it "ragged muffin." Like uneducated people in the South who, when they want to be elegant say, "I taken a walk," instead of "I took a walk."

Fourth of July was not such a big day with us, but we did have cap pistols and pink, blue or white torpedoes—harmless things like that. And at night some father set off a few skyrockets and Roman candles. The bigger boys had giant cannon crackers, and they would begin to fire them off at nine o'clock on the third of July and keep going with them all night long, so that there was no sleep for anybody the night before the Fourth. After we moved

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to Boston we had a lovely time on the Fourth. There the correct thing was to get up at four o'clock in the morning. It was just beginning to be light and some of us built a big bonfire in the vast back yard of our apartment house while the boys stole milk from in front of doorways. Afterward we roasted potatoes and drank the stolen milk. The potatoes we brought from home. When big boys in New York roasted potatoes in bonfires, no boy would bring a potato from home. That would have been weak and shameful. The simplest, correct way to get the potatoes was this: a boy would pass a vegetable stand and another boy would come along and start to push him around, and in the fight grab off his hat and throw it into a bushel of potatoes. Of course the boy had to rescue his hat from the bushel and with it, unseen, he brought along a few potatoes. Another way was to pass a nail through a cork, tie a string on it, and throw it into a barrel. As it came away a potato or an apple came along with it. But this I am telling on hearsay. I cannot vouch for its truth.

New Year's Day was our best day of the year because both children and grown-ups had a good time from morning till night. To the Gentiles around us it was a more important holiday than Christmas, certainly a more festive one. They were mostly Germans and in Germany New Year's Day is the big day for gay goings-on. It began on *Silvester Abend*—New Year's Eve—when we all went to the kitchen of one of my aunts and there the grown-ups played cards and all of us sang songs, and there would be talking and laughing and eating, and we were allowed to stay up later than any other night of the year.

The minute we got out of bed on New Year's Day we

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dashed in to see the presents the grocer and the butcher and the baker had sent. This was one holiday for which Mama did not do any baking, because it wasn't homemade cakes you had on New Year's Day. You bought little round puffy white cakes with anise seed. And there was lebkucken, a kind of German spice cake, and then the special New Year's cake which the baker sent. It was either a brown cake trimmed with the words *Glückliches Neues Jahr* in pink and white frosting, or a big round white one, with pink candy beads sprinkled on top, that tasted like Scotch shortcake.

Hardly had breakfast been cleared away than callers began to come in. On the table was the best white tablecloth with a carafe of wine and a circle of little glasses. All our uncles and the boy cousins who were old enough and all the men that we knew would call on New Year's Day and would be served with wine and cakes. Very proud were the little boys when they were old enough to start making New Year calls. This was by no means a workingman's custom only. Everybody in New York did the same thing, as can be seen from the novels of the period. Girls and women did not go calling. They stayed at home and received visitors. We were allowed a sip of wine but did not like it. To everybody you saw you said, "Happy New Year!" and you meant it, you felt so glad. Only by using both will and mind, have I been able to get rid of the idea that the coming of a new year means something good in my life. And I am not so sure about it even now.

We had fun on the Jewish New Year too. Coming as it does in the early Fall, it is obviously the remnant of

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an old harvest festival. Within four weeks there are four Jewish holidays in a row. First the New Year, then the Day of Atonement, then the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles and then the end of the Feast of Tabernacles. On the first of these all Jews who belonged to a Temple or could afford to buy seats went to Temple. We never did. For us it meant staying home from school, Papa's staying home from work, and lots of good things to eat, seeing our aunts and cousins and uncles. It was a pleasant time.

A week later came the dreary Day of Atonement, sad and long for the grown-ups because they had to fast all day. And it was not fasting in the Catholic sense. They had nothing to eat or to drink from sundown one day to sundown the next—not even a swallow of water. At the end of it Mama would be dizzy and sick—not because she had gone without food but because she had gone without her coffee. She was too ill to eat a meal at once, but would begin with a bite of pickled herring and a cup of coffee. Papa of course ignored the whole thing. We children managed to get a good deal of fun out of it. We stayed home from school, and as Mama would have no food cooked or served Papa had to take us out to get our lunch. This going out for lunch was wonderful. We usually went to Tante Gustel's, who was never as devout as Mama.

The beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles was a quiet day. Jews who had a back yard built an arbor there and celebrated the day in that. This was the proper thing to do, but was, of course, out of the question for people who lived in flats. Next would come the end of the Feast of

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Tabernacles which was for very young children. On this day the baby would be set in the middle of the floor and over her we would throw raisins, nuts and candy. The other children would dance about and eat them, but the poor baby was not allowed to have any. I suppose the throwing of confetti is a cheaper and more practical remnant of this harvest festival.

The baking that went on for most of these Jewish holidays was gargantuan. Mama would bake large sweet twisted loaves of bread and great squares of coffee cake and little cakes which we called *gefüllte bubes*—"stuffed grandmothers," if you please. I don't know where the name comes from, but they are made with a yeast dough rolled thin and sprinkled thickly with almonds, citron and raisins. Then the dough is rolled up into a long strip which is cut into small slices. We helped enthusiastically in the cutting up of the citron and raisins and almonds, and we managed to slip a good many into our mouths as we went along.

For most of the children the big thing was staying home from school. Many Jewish workers today in offices, factories and stores who pay no attention to religious practice for the rest of the year have a way of becoming suddenly devout as these holy days approach. It's a pious way to get a day off. It's an odd thing I used to notice in offices where I worked that Gentiles who had little use for Jews often liked them and sympathized with them on these religious days off. You'd think they would have been jealous—and no doubt sometimes they were—but usually they liked to see Jews being religious.

CHAPTER X

CASPAR

ALL children of working people in cities do not run around wild and uncontrolled. All of them do not dash under automobiles. All of them do not come in only when they are hungry or go to bed only when they feel like it. This picture is false; at least it is false in my memory. The people I knew were cramped in a grim prison of respectability, in dry honesty and uprightness.

Most poor people are imprisoned in respectability. After all, no man who every single day is faced with the danger of losing his job can be courageous and face danger in other parts of his life. If he uses up large doses of courage in meeting the rent day, it is pretty hard also to be brave about Love or Life. Of course a man may get desperate because he knows he cannot pay the rent and he knows he has lost his job, and there is no hope at all. Then he may spit in the face of the world about everything, because why shouldn't he? He has nothing to lose, not even his chains.

If he is living in the city and he has no piece of land to stand on firmly and no sure job to wrap around him and keep him warm, then he has got to make something solid and warm and steady for himself. The most simple thing of that kind is his own family. And it is hard to keep a poor family together without simple, respectable

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qualities. Maybe I have figured this out all wrong, but it seems to me that there must be something like that to explain the narrow tight set of standards in which I grew up.

I knew nothing about gangsters when I was a little girl. There were, to be sure, some bad boys in the neighborhood, big boys who were rough, but they were something that we saw on the horizon—that passed with noise and confusion on days like Hallowe'en when their stockings full of flour were bigger than our boys'. They were boys who mostly lived in Avenue A, which was much poorer than First Avenue. They played on the lots near the East River; they had no solid existence for us at all. None of the children we knew became gangsters—they simply, I think, were not poor enough. Our mothers did not have to go to work and leave us all day to play in the streets—our fathers were not drunken. It is when people are so poor that they cannot keep a solid family, when mothers have to go out to work and leave children to play on the streets, when fathers have no ease or privacy except in getting drunk, when there is nothing at all to stand on, that a child may become a gangster. We stood on something solid—the safety in Mama's kitchen, the trust in Papa's strength. But one degree more of poverty and there would have been nothing solid—and we'd have fallen through.

Our mothers kept us on too tight a leash of discipline, but if our mothers had gone out to work it would have been different. Some of the tenement mothers across the street did go to work and you could sometimes tell it by

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the way their children looked—buttons missing and hair not neat.

Of course the mothers of large families of poor children in New York do not want to work in shops or factories. They take jobs to pay the rent or because there isn't enough to eat at home. When their mothers do go to work, the children have to look out for themselves. Even if these mothers are not always the best trainers of children, working people cannot afford to pay for more experienced directors.

If as a society we had common sense, the mother of a family could work a few hours a day and the father work a few hours a day, and so earn enough to feed their children. There would be no problem about it. But we are so far from being sensible that these are just empty words.

There was a boy named Caspar who, among those we know, came nearest to being a gangster. I don't know why he didn't go all the way. Maybe there was no gang on his block, maybe his father was not poor enough, maybe he himself was not bright enough. Anyway he began his career the way gangsters are supposed to do; he was dull at school, he played truant, he would not work, and once he struck his mother.

Caspar did not live on our block, but we knew him well enough. He was a drab-looking boy. He had stiff light hair, but his eyes and his heavy homely face had a brownish look. He was strong, too—a solid little boy with broad shoulders. There wasn't any light in his face;

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the eyes looked dead, and when we met him he would say "hella-aw" in a dropping voice. It sounded as though he had no use for us and wanted to get away. There was a little contempt in it, too. We were all good little children and he was a bad boy. We did not like him a bit. He was heavier and rougher than the rest of us.

We were not really such good children, but our badness was simple and ordinary. We fought and quarreled and we pulled each other's hair and called each other names. And when a strange child looked at us, the correct thing to say was "I hope you know me next time you see me." Or better: "Do you see me? Do you know me? Do you want a piece of boloney?" Or Dolly would whistle, "Where did you get that hat"? As much as anything else this was because we were shy and did not know what to do when a strange child looked at us, but we said it in an angry way to show them. They did the same thing to us. But the one who got it out first was the winner.

And Benny even played truant once. He had been going to school for a couple of months—he was only five years old—when one day he and another little boy named Josey decided pleasantly that school was not worth the bother. It was a naïve truancy because all they did was to let the rest of us go on to school while they stayed in front of the house, where anybody might have seen them, and played. The candy store's boy who was mean told on them and chased them around the block. So they had to go to school after all. And that's all there was to that.

Caspar's truancy was on a larger scale. He was left behind in his classes until he was much older than the

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others, so when he was about eleven years old he would not go to school any more at all. He was a stubborn boy, and nothing could be done about it. Or maybe he was a sensitive boy with a strong will, but nobody ever said that about him. The truancy scared his meager and strait-laced parents. They pointed to their eldest son Philip and said to Caspar: "Look what a bright boy Philip is! How he studied! And now he has a fine job." Philip was the bright boy of the family. He had no doubt about it himself. He thought he was both bright and handsome, and his parents thought so too. Philip was tall, and his little brother was small and chunky. Philip had studied hard and had done well in school, and Caspar was stupid. Over and over again his foolish parents pointed out these things. They told him: "Philip can do it. Why can't you? Look how proud we are of Philip. Why can't you make us proud of you?" Of course this did not make Caspar love Philip, nor did it make him love his parents very much. He had a little sister too who was so good that he could not bear her.

He played truant, at first often, then regularly, and then altogether. His parents did the best they knew how. They kept right on pointing to the bright Philip, and the obedient good sister. They scolded Caspar, and talked to him, and threatened him. They beat him. But none of it made any difference to Caspar.

His big brother Philip did his best, too. He ordered the little boy around and made fun of him and told him what he ought to do and how he ought to do it, and sometimes he slapped him.

Dull boys like Caspar usually went to work when they

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were thirteen or fourteen, but when the time came Caspar refused to go to work. He would not work and he would not go to school. In the daytime, when his father and his brother were at work, he hung around the house. In the evenings he hung around the street corners and the pool rooms. He was going the gangster road as though someone had drawn a good map of it for him.

Sullenly he would ask his mother for ten cents, fifteen cents, or a quarter. She loved him. She did not mean to be unkind. She was only stupid. But people are fearfully punished for being stupid. Her suffering about him was an anguish, and she always gave him the few pennies she could spare. Philip's outraged anger—when he found out about it, which he nearly always did—was loud and strong. And he had good reason. At the office he had been promoted and was making decent pay. But his father was out of work, and Philip was taking care of the whole family—his mother and his father and the prim sister and the youngest boy Harry. There was a girl Philip liked. He wanted to marry her, but she was a poor girl and Philip had to give her up because he could not support her and his own family too. And he was always getting bad colds. His best friend had died of tuberculosis and he had caught a touch of it himself, though he did not know it then. While he worked and coughed and stuck to the job and the family, there was Caspar sitting about like a block of stone or running around in pool rooms, eating the food that Philip earned and using the space that Philip paid rent for. No smile or thank you. Nothing but rough silence. Every time Philip looked at Caspar, he

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thought, "If that bum would go to work, I could get married!"

Such a mess of hate had to burst out into something. One day Philip and his father walked into the kitchen just in time to hear Caspar asking his mother for money. Before their faces, she dared not give it to him. A shrinking and timid white-faced woman, when pushed too hard, she grew querulous and when pushed beyond bearing she shrieked in hysterical rage. Now, torn by fear of her oldest son and exasperated by Caspar, she joined his father and brother in their nagging fury. "Look at my hair, how gray it is!" she screamed at Caspar. "You did that. Your fault. In shame I am hanging my head before my neighbors. Look at Philip. You—why can't you be a good boy too? What have I done to deserve this? Look how Philip goes to work and brings his pay envelope home every Saturday. Why can't you be like Philip? I work my fingers to the bone— And you— You low-life! You lazy loafer! You bum!"

Caspar had lost his last friend. He went a little mad. Never any good with words, he did what he had learned to do on the streets—he jumped up and slapped his mother's face. Then he turned and ran out of the room. He did not need to put his cap on because he had not taken it off. The door slammed, and they heard his heavy feet pounding on the stairs. He did not come back—not for weeks, and not for months. Perhaps he was ashamed.

But stories about him came back. They said he was a bum; but then they had already called him a bum and a loafer for years, so I don't suppose that made much

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difference. There was a story that he was in jail in Philadelphia, in Baltimore, and other places. They wondered if he were a thief. Every two or three years he would appear suddenly, get a dollar or two from his mother, and disappear again on his vague and cloudy way. He seemed to be set for life on the road of the tramp and the jailbird.

His mother could not bear it. For five years she grew slowly thinner and weaker, and then she died. Did he, torn with remorse, thereupon straighten up and become a fine citizen? He did not. As far as I know, Caspar did not even come back for the funeral. Perhaps he didn't know about her death; anyway he did nothing about it. Two or three more years passed, and his father, the lean old man who had never liked him, died too. He had not been sensible about Caspar. He had not tried to understand his son or to save him from shame when he was not as bright as the other children in school. His idea of training the boy was to niggle and quarrel and to beat him with a strap. It was narrow and dry, and it was stupid, but it was not meant to be cruel. The old man did not know what else to do. He thought he was being a good father.

The elder brother, the proud one, was now head of the family. There was one more left behind, the youngest of all—the boy Harry, who was sixteen. Harry was working—Philip had got him a job as messenger—and he lived with Philip and Philip's wife. Caspar was now thirty-five years old. He had been a bad boy from the time he was six. For many years he had been living in barns and jails, and running from police, and begging for hand-outs. One day Caspar quietly came back to New York.

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His father whom he had hated was dead; his mother who had found fault with him was dead; his brother Philip was now head of the family.

He did not go near Philip, but he waited one night for Harry. What he said to him I don't know. But strangely when he finished the young boy who had been told always that Caspar was no good, went off with him at once. "I'll take care of you," said Caspar as they went, and Harry believed him. Maybe Harry did not like Philip or Philip's healthy, cold, hard-saving wife.

And now comes the part of the story which no one understands. Abruptly Caspar stopped being a tramp. He got himself a job delivering newspapers. It did not take him a week or a month to get it; he got it at once.

That was fifteen years ago, and from that day to this, he has worked steadily and has got on in the world. He now owns a small business. The work he does is rough, but it is as honest and as decent as his parents would have asked. He earns a hundred dollars a week; he has even married a wife and has several children. Harry is his partner and lives with him.

But—and I think this is important—Caspar has changed his name, so forever cutting off all possible relation to his life as a little boy.

CHAPTER XI

FEAR

IT seems to me that when I was a child the weather was always sunny. I remember neither rain nor heat. Except for the moment's clash with the icy featherbed on a winter night I was never cold. I had no physical comfort or discomfort. My body was healthy.

During these days that seem so sunny in my mind came the big blizzard of 1888. New York has never since had a snow like that. The screaming wind blew frozen white hills up to the second story of the houses; the stores were buried. Men had to shovel paths so that we could get in and out of the front door. This and much more has been told us—how street cars stopped, how there was no milk and the men could not go to work. There was no coal. Each family bought its coal by the scuttleful from the little coal man in the dark damp cellar under the hardware store. Now the coal man had none himself. But all that I actually know of the epic storm is the sun shining on the snow.

There was no steam heat, and on winter nights we undressed, one at a time, in front of the big kitchen stove. Sometimes on cold days the parlor stove was lighted too. I can see it now with the glow back of the isinglass and I can smell the coalish, dusty smell, but I don't remember feeling cold. We used to run after the ice wagon on summer days and pick up pieces of ice that fell from the

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strong ax of the good-natured iceman, and it tasted good, but I don't remember feeling warm. This seems queer to me, but I can only tell about it as it is.

If our furniture was shabby, I did not know it. If Papa's clothes were shiny and Mama's were worn, I didn't know that. In memory all these things look new and fresh.

Why did these years of my childhood seem always sunny? I lived in the harsh and irregular climate of New York, and never once did I get to the country. We were nagged by the day-after-day rasping need for money. I had no pretty things and almost no toys. I loved to read and had no books. I thought of myself as homely and ill-tempered. I was afraid of many things.

My fears alone should have kept me unhappy. It is as though I set out to make a collection of foolish fears for myself. I was afraid of horses and dogs and of cats. Many city children are. They don't grow up comfortably and cozily with puppies and kittens; and, especially in poor neighborhoods, the cats and dogs that run around are apt to be dirty. And Mama, afraid of the dirt on a stray dog or cat would say, "Look out or he'll bite you." So we believed that every wretched little dog or kitten that came about would on the slightest provocation rush at us and tear us to pieces.

Of horses we were dreadfully afraid. They were so big and they ran down the street with such a heavy clomp-clomp, and of course we were always being told: "Look out or they'll run over you." "Look out or they'll kick you." It seemed to me that a horse could not be anything but a source of continuous and immediate terror. To be

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sure, I read of certain ponies and colts in books. But the animals I met in books had no relation to the ones I met on the street. They were dressed in glamour, and all the horses I saw were never dressed in anything except dirty harness, or in the summer in straw hats.

I was not at all afraid of lightning and I think that was because Dolly, who was younger than I, was afraid of it and turned to me for protection. She was much braver than I and had few fears, but in a thunderstorm she would tremble so that the bed shook. Then she would cling to me. And so, of course, I could not be afraid of thunderstorms—and I never was.

There were others fears from which we were free. They were the sort of fears that children in the country are likely to have—children who grew up in places where the lights are not good or where there are ignorant servants. No one told us stories about old Rawhead and Bloody Bones and how he was waiting in the attic to come and get us in the dark. We were not afraid of ghosts. Mama would not allow us to hear any stories about ghosts or tales of bogeymen. If someone started to talk about a bogeyman and what he would do to us if we were bad, Mama would cut in with smiling indifference: "There isn't any bogeyman. That's all just nonsense." So we were not afraid of giants and bogeymen and such creatures. And for the same reason I was not afraid of the dark.

There was a fear which rode heavily on all the people around, but which never touched us. That was the fear of infection. Scarlet fever and diphtheria were then virulent pests. Nobody knew just what to do to avoid them, but everybody thought that they were catching. That is,

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everybody except Mama. Mama would say calmly: "There's no such thing as catching a sickness if you have healthy blood. We have healthy blood. We are not going to catch anything." Five of my cousins, in the course of a few years, died of diphtheria. Mama would sit with them and help to nurse them and then would come home, and after carefully scrubbing her hands and face would go about preparing our meals. My aunts thought it most unwise. It was bad enough that she kept the windows open at night even in the winter, but staying with the sick children was even worse. They said: "You are foolish. The children will—"

And Mama would say: "All right. I'm foolish then, but I know what I know. Nobody's going to be sick in this house. You wait and see." And, strangely, we children never did catch anything except a light case of the measles which we all had at the same time. To this day, in spite of common sense and reason, I cannot be properly afraid of infectious diseases.

We were terribly frightened by stories of Jack the Ripper. We did not know that he was a London creature. We thought that he was in New York and that he stood around every dark corner. In Massachusetts the children of the next generation used to be afraid like that of a man whom they called the Bear-hugger, who hugged children to death. This also grew out of a series of fearful newspaper stories. We did not know the truth about Jack the Ripper; we thought that he killed children.

A few blocks from where we lived were two German picnic grounds, Jones's Wood and Washington Park, and

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around these were empty fields. We called them the lots. They were filled with rank smelling grass, with rubbish and tin cans and goats. This was enchanted ground for us and we always wanted to go there but were strictly forbidden by our parents. "They are too far from home." "There might be tramps and bad boys." Only Benny and the other little boys slipped away and went there as often as they could. It was nice to go somewhere that was forbidden, and the benches and tables and open spaces were enchanting. After we heard the talk about Jack the Ripper, our long-held and almost unbearable desire to play in these empty lots passed away.

All little girls had another special fear of their own. When our hair did not hang in curls it was plaited in two long braids and tied with ribbons at the end. We always had a horrid fear that bad men would cut off these braids. This seems funny when I think of the enthusiasm with which we all cut them off ourselves after we grew up. I suppose the talk about those wretches was surrounded by some aura of depravity which frightened us, though we did not understand in the least what it meant.

One day I had a bad fright. Above the street floor the halls of the house were dark, and as I was walking up the second flight of stairs with a bag of eggs in my hand, I suddenly felt a hand grasp my leg—through the banisters. It was four o'clock in the afternoon, but I thought swiftly, "If I call Mama he won't be afraid, but if I call Papa, he'll run away." So, although Papa was at the factory, I screamed "Papa" at the top of my voice, and sure enough the hand let go and I heard footsteps rushing down the stairs. I dared not turn and look but ran on

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up. Before I got to the top every door was opened and every woman was looking out to see what had happened. And Mama told Papa that night: "The smart child, she called Papa." We never found out who it was, and there were unkind people whose expressions indicated that they thought I had imagined all of it. I really think it was the janitor's boy having a little fun. But it did not seem fun to me.

One time the grown-ups got a scare. That was the time of the explosion at Hell Gate, the narrow passage in the East River on whose rocks so many boats have been wrecked. Now the government was having them blown up so that bigger ships could go up Long Island Sound. Hell Gate was over a mile away, but one morning everybody in the whole neighborhood was waked up by a blast which shook the houses. They thought it was an earthquake, and our clock fell off the kitchen mantelpiece. It was interesting to have a fear which the grown-ups shared. It made us feel a little important.

And then there was that other day when the goat chased us. We were all playing on the sidewalk—black-eyed Millie and handsome Georgie, who were my age, and Dolly, and the four-year-old boys, my brother Benny and Josey and Milt—when down the street a goat came strolling; one of the goats that lived in the empty lots near the East River. "Oh," shrieked somebody, "there's a goat." Instantly all of us turned and ran. And when the goat saw us run, whether he thought it was a game or an exercise I do not know, but he started to run, too, and he came leaping after us. Our cowardice was immediate and abject. The bigger ones—Georgie and Millie and Dolly

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and I—went clattering up the stairs, leaving the little four-year-olds trailing behind. Last of all came Benny wailing, "Don't leave me, don't leave me." But we did leave him. That was especially shameful on my part because as the oldest I was supposed to help take care of all the younger ones. And we did not stop until we reached the top of the first flight of stairs. There we peered through the banisters. Just as poor little Benny came staggering into the doorway, the one little girl whom we did not like came dashing out with a dustpan and brush that she got from her kitchen. She waved those at the goat, and he turned and fled.

Most fears are implanted in children. I have a friend who says that she was always afraid in her mother's house, but never in her grandmother's, that in her mother's house the servants told her terrifying things. The ceilings were high, and the rooms large, and there were great dark hanging portières. But in her grandmother's house nobody told her terrifying stories, and so she was not afraid.

I know a man otherwise fearless who is so afraid of spiders that after he was grown he once turned over a boat with himself and several other people because he saw they were about to run into an enormous spider web. A spider had bitten him when he was two years old, but he had been bitten by a dog and been burned by fire. Neither of these had implanted in him an unconquerable fear. But when the spider bit him his mother had screamed with terror, and so her terror was fixed for life in his mind.

It is easy to understand why I should have been afraid

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of animals and of Jack the Ripper, but not afraid of the dark and of ghosts. These attitudes had been planted in me by Mama. But there were some fears that seemed to have no sense at all. Over and over again I would dream that the Second Avenue Elevated had chosen to leave its tracks and come dashing and snorting across the roofs of the houses. The elevated trains were pulled by steam then and I would dream that the engine, belching smoke and blowing its whistle and pulling along behind it its long train of cars, would start to cross the airshaft between the next house and ours. And at that point I would always wake up in a dreadful state. I shivered and wondered what would happen when the train reached our house. I was like the little boy who said to his mother, "Mommie, do you suppose bears dream about me, too? 'Cause if they do, I think they must dream they catch me." For I used to think that the engine would some day catch me. When I was awake in the daytime I was never afraid of the Second Avenue Elevated. I liked to go on it. It was exciting. Only in sleep it became dangerous.

Bigger and blacker than all these was my fear of a broken doll.

Into my grown-up life I have not carried many of these fears exactly as they were. What I have carried along is the tendency to physical fear. I am afraid of high places and of walking across a narrow plank, of riding in an airplane—at least before the plane starts. I have got over the fear of cats and dogs. I love cats and don't mind dogs. But I have not got over my fear of horses, so that I have never been able to learn to ride a horse. The fear of the broken doll I have conquered, except the mean lit-

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tle lees of it that lie deep in my spirit. The last time this rose to pester me was one day when I was walking in the Metropolitan Museum, through an aisle filled with broken arms and legs and bodies of dug-up Greek statues. I was annoyed but not surprised.

But because of Papa's gambling spirit and because I heard no talk of spiritual fears, I have grown up without these. I am not afraid of the future. I have not even ordinary common sense about it; if I only had, I might have saved money. I have no fear of new ventures. The only fear of that sort I have is a queer one. Every time I start to do a new piece of work I think I am not going to be able to do it. I have to get hold of this and choke it before I can go on.

As I record here this mountain of fears, this miasma of terror in which I seem to have had my being, and as I think of all the childish troubles I had besides, it seems to me as though I ought to have been quite miserable. But no. These days lie spread in glittering sunshine in my memory, because I felt safe, protected and secure, because I trusted in my mother and my father. I knew they would take care of me. The fears were terrible and many, but there was none they could not save me from. Papa was not afraid of anything—physical, mental or spiritual. At least if he was afraid we never saw any sign of it. Not that he blustered. But the whole realm of fear seemed not to exist for him. He never said anything about it one way or another.

When fire broke out in the house I was not afraid, because Mama stood in the doorway, and I knew she would

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look out for me. But when I was four years old my Tante Gustel took me to spend the night with her. I liked going and I liked my aunt, but about one o'clock in the morning I cried so bitterly that she had to get up, dress herself, dress me and take me back to my Mama. I rarely cried, so I must have been badly frightened. And when I was six, a cousin who lived in Coney Island took me to visit her and her children. Coney Island then was a simple, quiet, empty place. For hours that night I lay awake. It was only a poor little house, but the room seemed to be enormous, with great black shadows high above me. In memory I cannot possibly see as far as the ceiling. I lay there and trembled.

But at home I was safe. Is that one of the things that make grown people so weary—the thought that they are not safe, that they can never be safe again? The modern woman looks with pity and with wonder on the *lady*—the helpless woman of another day. She wonders what “ladies” found in life half so good as freedom. Maybe it was a sense of safety. They went from the safety of their mothers and fathers to the safety of a domineering, all-powerful husband.

It is for safety that slaves are willing to be slaves; clerks are willing to work long dull hours without hope. It is for safety that women give up lovers and men give up careers. There are men willing to go to prison because they feel safe and protected there. Protected from what? Protected from life. But no matter what they give up, or where they may go, or where they refrain from going, grown people can find no safety, because by safety they

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mean the warm, sunny, sheltered feeling they had as children.

They call the church mother, and they cling to her because she gives them the lost sense of safety that they had as children. Perhaps that is one reason why people closely attached to churches never want anything changed. There are people so naïve that they think profoundly religious people look happy because they are good. That, of course, is nonsense. They look happy because they have found in a church a mother and a vanished security.

People turn to dictators and tyrants with relief. Der Fuehrer, Mussolini—these take the place of the father who ordered them about; and if the order is harsh, they comfort themselves by thinking that the harshness is good for them, as they had been told when they were children.

It is because I felt safe, because I thought my mother and father were all-powerful, that my memory of those years is so full of sunshine. When the belief in their all-power was shattered I was eleven years old, and from that time I remember cold and rain.

CHAPTER XII

SIN

WHEN you say the word "sin" to most people, they think immediately of sex, but sin did not mean that to us. Only once did I meet anything that had a sexual implication for me. That once was as misty as it was painful.

On the street floor of the house, baby carriages were kept in a dark angle of the hall. Nobody ever went there except to take out or to leave a carriage. One afternoon a little girl named Irma whispered to me that, if I would go back there with her, she would tell me a secret. She did not live in our house, but sometimes she came around and played with us. She was a well grown, strong looking girl with enormous vitality, and often Mama would tell us what a good girl Irma was. She helped her mother, she was always willing to take care of the baby, she studied her lessons, and she did not get any spots on her clothes. If you had wanted to know then which of us would amount to most when she grew up, each of us would have said Irma. I asked about Irma the other day and found out that she has never married and that she has made a steady fair living for herself.

The day she took me back into the dark corner, she began to show me an interesting possibility; but she merely began because we heard the sound of someone walking in the front of the hall and, scared, we ran out. Why should I have been scared when I did not really

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understand what was happening? It was all new to me, and I had never heard that that sort of thing was wrong. I had never heard about it anyway. Maybe I knew more than I realized. Certainly I knew I was doing the wrong thing. After that I avoided Irma. I never again went with her into a dark place. But the pity of it was that for years I felt dreadfully ashamed. And that, fantastic as it may sound, was my only conscious meeting with anything of sexual significance.

This is not unusual with little girls. If the little boys we grew up with told each other dirty jokes and sexual truths, I did not know of it. Although we had three bedrooms, the doors were usually wide open and you had to pass through each bedroom to get to the next. But the atmosphere was monastic. I never saw Mama or Papa dressing. Once in awhile we saw Mama with her waist off and Papa without a shirt when he washed at the kitchen sink after he got home from work. That was all. So this incident with the little girl, trifling as it may sound, was so painful for me as a child that it has been hard for me to write about it here. After all, it does not matter so much what happens to us as children, bad or good, large or small; what matters is how we felt about it when we were children.

But naïve as we were, there was something unacknowledged, a hidden wonder in the back of our minds. One of the girls had an aunt, a big-nosed, noisy, lively woman, and every one of us knew that she was not a nice woman like our mothers. None of us could have told you what was wrong. Probably we got the idea from grown people's shrugs. And that is all I can tell you about vice when I

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was a child.

Papa and Mama were both oddly innocent. They discussed freely before us realities about money, but realities of any other aspect of life they never mentioned at all. They were Victorian in speech and thought. Papa, hot and hasty as his temper was, never swore in English or in German. He did not even use the word "darn." Mama would sometimes exclaim "*Gott im Himmel!*" (God in Heaven) or, pestered beyond endurance, she would turn on us and say, "*Ach, geh' zum Teufel!*"—in English, "Oh, go to the devil." Usually swearing in German sounds worse than it does in English. German is the language of catastrophe; cursing and terror say themselves better in German words. "*Der verfluchte Hund*" is a deep-throated curse far more terrible than the English, "that damned dog." And it is a common expression among angry Germans. If anybody said "*der verfluchte Hund*" in front of Mama she would look uncomfortable and probably flush. The color rose to her fair skin easily and for many reasons. What either of them would have done if someone had burst out with the vigorous words so freely used in more elegant and intellectual circles, I cannot imagine. It does not take much to make me swear vigorously, but I never shocked them by letting them hear me.

I was eight years old when my youngest sister Jenny was born. None of us had even a glimmer of suspicion of what was about to happen. Nobody even asked us whether we would like a little sister or brother. One morning before our usual getting-up time, Dolly and I woke up to see our round jolly neighbor, Mrs. Trueheart, standing in the doorway. She wasn't smiling the

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way she did other times, but she was smiling in a serious way. Mrs. Trueheart was an American, easy-going, plump and rosy. Though it was early in the morning, her black hair was smooth and shining. When did these mothers comb their hair? It was always neat! She said: "Now, children, you be good and stay right here. Don't get out of bed and don't make any noise till I come and get you. You hear now? Not a sound." At once we began to burn with an excited curiosity which would have sent us leaping out of bed, but there was a little fear mixed with it which kept us quiet. Maybe Mama was sick. What else could bring Mrs. Trueheart into the house so early?

Once before Mama had been ill. She did not believe she could "catch anything" because she had healthy blood, but she did not know erysipelas was contagious. Anyway we did not catch it. That time she lay for a week in her big walnut bed with the high fancy headboard, her face covered with a white mask of bandages. Though we knew it was Mama back of the bandages, we were awfully scared of her. Her bedroom was next to the kitchen and we had to go back and forth through it all day long. We tiptoed as we went, stealing fearful side glances at the white disguised stranger in the bed. For the whole week we had wandered around in lost confusion, and we did not want that sort of thing to happen again.

"Is Mama sick?" we asked Mrs. Trueheart.

"Never mind, now." She came in and smoothed the covers around us. Those mothers were always smoothing something, the covers on a bed, their big gingham aprons, the cloth on a table, a child's ruffled hair. "Be quiet now." She shook her plump short finger at us and as she went

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out, she shut the door. That was queer.

We lay whispering, wondering what was happening beyond the closed door. Suddenly we heard the doctor's voice. We sat up, big-eyed with fear. There was no other sound for a long, long time; and then the door opened and Mrs. Trueheart came back. "Now you can come. I've got something to show you." And there was Mama in bed with a strange baby. Jenny had been born on the other side of a thin yellow wooden door, painted to look like oak, and we had not heard a sound. But the doctor showed us the satchel in which he had brought her. The room did not look neat, the way it always did. On the marble top of the washstand stood a big bowl of water, and on the marble top of the walnut dresser was a pile of white crumpled rags. We could have told in a minute that Mama wasn't up and around, even if we hadn't seen her in bed. This time she did not have any mask on.

The first time I met the word benevolent in a book, I thought it meant someone like Dr. Berkheim. He lived on Seventy-second Street, in a brownstone house with a high stoop. He was broad and round and short, so jolly that we were never afraid of him even when he vaccinated us. He was there when each of us was born. When he came to the house Papa would hand him a dollar. That was his charge for a visit. Sometimes there was no dollar, and, since the doctor always was paid in cash, that was pretty serious. As I remember Dr. Berkheim, I am sure he would have treated us for nothing if we had needed it, but Mama and Papa could not face asking such a favor. Indeed, it never occurred to them. Once when Dolly had pneumonia there was not a cent in the house, and Papa

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pawned his overcoat. This was one of the acrid common-places of the poor; and anyway, Papa said, it was nearly spring and he could not have worn the coat much longer.

Mrs. Trueheart went away and a strange woman with a big stiff white apron stood by the bed, and the doctor patted our heads and said: "Now, here's Mrs. Gutkopf. You be good children and do what she tells you to." It was exciting having a strange woman in the house who would do the cooking and cleaning. Benny had been sent away for the night and when he saw the strange woman and the baby he was excited too. But when he found out that the baby was a girl he was bored. "Throw it in the ash barrel," he said.

I suppose in small towns children see and hear a great deal more. City children rarely see animals propagating; we probably did sometimes, but we didn't know we did. The prostitutes and drunks whom a small-town child may see, and even know by sight and name, did not exist for us. We sometimes saw someone drunk on the street, but the person was remote, unconnected with our lives. It was never anybody whom we knew. These drunken men were always ragged, dirty, tousle-headed. We did not associate the idea of drunkenness with the kind of people we knew. The only time Papa did get a little bit tight was before I was born. Mama and Papa had been to a wedding and when they came home, at one in the morning, Papa sat down on the bed and began to sing. He had no voice, but it was not because of esthetic revulsion that Mama objected. It was because the neighbors could hear.

"Oh, keep quiet. Stop, do stop," she kept saying.

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"They'll hear you downstairs, or upstairs or next door."

And Papa answered, in between bursts of song: "This is my house. I pay the rent. I have a right to sing. And I'm going to sing." And then abruptly he went to sleep.

This was the first time and it was the last time, and Mama was dreadfully shocked. But soon it became a funny story. He never again drank too much. He never even wanted to.

There was one little girl among us who was a better little girl than Irma. This good little girl was named Pauline, and she was a year older than I. A quiet and obedient model of industry, she used to crochet yards of lace. Whenever you saw her, her hands were busily working on a piece of spotless, fancy white lace. Dolly and I, under urgent orders, used to crochet, too, but we never got beyond an inch or two of dirty scrap. Naturally we were annoyed at Pauline's prowess and her long rolls of clean white accomplishment. She had no little girl friends of her own. She never played any running or dancing or lively game with us, but once in a while she did play jacks. Otherwise she would sit quietly on a chair or on the stoop and crochet. She liked to be among grown people and, with her eyes down on her work, would listen to every word they said. Her starched dresses were always without a crease. Her aprons, after a week's wear, looked as though she had just put them on. She had lovely auburn hair, which she wore in smooth long braids, and the freckled complexion that sometimes goes with red hair. With modern hairdressing and long earrings, she would have had an exotic decadent beauty that was fashionable in the 1920's.

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We got pretty tired of hearing our mothers praise her, and yet they did not like her as heartily as they pretended. We would say, "Do you want us to be a tattle-tale like her?"

"No, but I want you to be quiet like her and mind me when I talk."

"Yeah?" we said. "She has lots of fights, but she waits until her Mama isn't around." She did. She had snarling, low-voiced rows, while ours were carried on with loud shouts.

One day when I was about thirteen, Pauline, who was sitting on our steps, stopped her crocheting for a moment. She bent close and began to tell us in a whisper the secret mysteries of sex. The facts of life would have startled us from any source, but hearing them come from Pauline we were so shocked and horrified that we got up and ran away and left her sitting there. Perhaps we were prim children, but there was something quite dreadful about this proper, quiet little girl, crocheting white lace and whispering such things.

What a pity that no one around her could recognize where all these odd actions of Pauline pointed. A modern psychiatrist would have known that here were the symptoms of a dangerous neurosis at the least, and, at the worst, of dementia praecox. Pauline was doomed. By the time she was twenty-one years old she had no sexual control at all, although she had never had a lover. When I last saw her she was twenty-two. Her dress was dirty and her hair stood out rough and uncombed. For hours she sat in a chair with her head hanging and her mouth open. Her hands lay dead in her lap. Mostly she was silent,

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and melancholy, but the few words she spoke were snarling. Only one week later she was taken away to an asylum with an incurable case of dementia praecox. She has been there for over thirty years.

There was one depravity that we could not help hearing about—that of the mothers who beat their children viciously. Nearly all parents then believed in whipping as a substitute for logic. Once Papa did spank me, only once—it had to be me—and the results were bad. I was four years old and Dolly was three, and I showed her how to play with matches till we almost set Benny on fire. Mama was on the edge of hysterics with fright, and when Papa came home she passed on her terror to him. So I was spanked. A few slaps. It did not hurt much, but it filled me with shame and hate. In my four-year-old mind I hated Papa for the shock to my pride, and I kept up that hate for years—not all the time, but it was there. I kept it carefully to myself. Papa may have had some notion of what was going on in me; anyway, that was the last time he used force instead of sense in dealing with us. People thought it strange that Papa could make us obey without whipping. “Not even a slap!” they said in wonder. But Papa said his father had done enough of that to him; he was not going to treat a child of his that way. In this, as in almost everything else, he was ahead of his time.

In most of the kitchens of the other boys and girls a strap for whipping hung on a nail in the kitchen. These straps were there mostly as a threat, but sometimes they were used. The janitor of our house used her strap. She was a careful, honest German woman, always scrubbing and sweeping the halls and polishing the brass doorbells

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and letter boxes till they gleamed like yellow gold. She was a widow with two sons, one of them grown and the other a lively boy of fourteen whose name was Eddie. Often and terribly she beat this boy while the rest of the house listened in angry horror to his yells. We used to hear the grown people say: "Eddie's not a bad boy. Just noisy—a regular boy. Why does she always give him such whippings?" But Mrs. Schaf said, "Eddie's a bad boy, and I'm going to cure him."

And there was a woman who owned a store on the block—an Austrian Jewish woman. She had two boys. One of them she used to beat without mercy, and the grown people would say, "She is turning him into an idiot." I don't know whether he was a subnormal child and she hated him for that or whether the beatings did something to his mind. He was not an idiot. He was a good-natured boy, with a foolish apologetic smile, but he always seemed to be in a sort of daze. When he grew up he was shy and timid. He would have been a good mechanic if let alone; he may have had sensible ideas on other matters, but he was afraid to say what he thought even when he was asked. He always acted as though somebody were going to tell him to shut up.

But the most horrible thing was the woman who set fire to the house; at least everybody thought she did. She had several children, some of them babies. The neighbors were sure that the woman had started the fire in her kitchen to get a few dollars of insurance. There was some story that her own children were all up and dressed, although it was midnight. There was no proof about it, and she got the little insurance money. But the

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neighbors were cold to her and distant. We were told not to play with her children; and in a week or two, unable to stand the frozen treatment, she moved away. Maybe she was innocent, but she was not a nice woman. She was grasping and loud.

I don't mean she was not respectable. Everybody was respectable in the house. You mustn't laugh too loud; you mustn't cry or be lazy; you mustn't sew on Saturday; you mustn't be sassy to your mother; and you mustn't, you mustn't—

The women seemed to have no amusement at all except talking to each other and playing with their babies and showing off in the baking of cakes and cooking. The only break in that iron, rigid respectability was Papa's playing poker and the races. I never knew until I was grown up how thankful I should be for these two shameful lapses. I have been as enslaved as most people to the need of making a living, but I have had more freedom in mind and spirit, and it is Papa's betting on the races and the habit of mind it started in me that gave me this freedom.

The word "sin" was with us pretty much of the time. There was one little Gentile boy who used to jump up and down, and yell in a sort of chant, "I'm going to commit all the sins—all the sins—excepting only the sin against the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost." When we demanded what was the sin against the Holy Ghost, he said he did not know. He was going to steal an apple and everything. I am told that one of the members of the President's Cabinet has a way of saying, "I have sinned" where another person might say "I made a mistake." He

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does not say "Perhaps that was an error that we made," but instead "Perhaps that was a sin." Only a person brought up in the most puritanical surroundings could speak that way. That was the way we spoke as children. If someone spent money extravagantly, Mama said, "What a sin!" And if some woman sat in the sun with her baby carriage, instead of scrubbing away at her kitchen floor, Mama said, "It's sinful to be so lazy." There were no errors with Mama. There were only sins.

I remember one awful day when I was about ten years old. There was not a cent in the house, and I was sent to Eighty-first Street to my aunt's to borrow a dollar. On the way back, I suppose I was as always half in a dream, but all of a sudden I stopped dead. I realized I no longer held the dollar. Somewhere it had slipped out of my hand and been lost. My misery was so intense that to this day I remember exactly how that spot looked. It was on Seventy-sixth Street, and at my left as I stood were high iron railings around an areaway. I looked down at the big flat gray paving stones, but there was no dollar there. Desperate and weeping blindly I walked back along the way I had come, but of course did not find the dollar. It was a huge sum of money. I did not know how I could go home and tell, and I was ashamed to go back to my aunt's. So near to pay day she probably wouldn't have another dollar to spare.

Slowly I turned to go home, and to comfort myself I lost myself in a dream again—this time about a kind man, a story-book man, like in a fairy tale, who would come along and see me crying with my eyes fixed on the ground, and would say, "What have you lost, my child?"

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and would give me a dollar. But the time arrived when I got to the door and there was no kind man and no dollar. I must have looked white and miserable because nothing happened. Mama began to scold but the catastrophe was too great for much scolding, and everything was silent and gloomy for the rest of the day. Mama said, "You would lose your head if it wasn't fastened on." But that had been said to me often before.

A major sin was to be unkind or cruel. Mama had a soft heart and a great pity for many people, and she trained us into this soft-heartedness. With me it has developed into a weakness and many a time has served as an escape from action. It is easier to pity people than to hate them, and it is much weaker. I cannot hurt people's feelings—perhaps this is a form of self-pity; perhaps it is a fear that I will be punished if I hurt someone else. Punished by whom? I don't know. Of course neither the fear nor the self-pity is a conscious thought. All I am conscious of is that I must stand this or that rather than hurt someone else. Maybe I am really rather noble. I don't know, but I doubt it. Nobility has been so thoroughly exposed that it would take a daring person to claim it.

Last summer I was talking to one of the newest brand of modern young woman. She said: "I don't like him. He's a liar."

"He doesn't lie," I replied, "and if he did it wouldn't be serious; it would only be funny. I'd like him anyway."

She looked at me sidewise, "Oh, you've got one of those big soft hearts."

It annoyed me. My capacity for pity abruptly vanished. I have detested that woman ever since. To be accused of

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a soft heart nowadays is as bad as if, ten years ago, you had been accused of having a soft head.

But I feel helpless about it. I was trained to be oversensitive, to have a thin skin, to be easily hurt and so be a nuisance to my friends. And I was trained into this business of kindness. And even if I realize that much kindness is based on self-pity, yet I don't like the hard attitude that comes under the head of self-expression. I'm afraid that I will just have to go on in the confusion in which I grew up.

This pitying attitude of Mama's for other people got us so that we were always sorry for her. We thought she had a hard life—and she did. But it never occurred to us to be sorry for Papa. He was a lonely man, bitter because he was surrounded by people who, with vast good nature, misunderstood him completely. Mama could fuss over Papa only when he was sick—and he was never sick.

Mama's brothers and sisters and cousins spent a good deal of time having nagging petty quarrels among themselves. They had really nothing in common except that they were related and had grown up together, and they were all overworked and worried, so quarrels leapt up easily and there was within these groups endless backbiting and quarrels and gossip. All of them came to Mama with these troubles and she was able to smooth them out and make them friends again. They loved and trusted her. They knew she would not repeat anything they told her. And she suffered with all of them in all such troubles as she could understand. But there were many troubles that she did not and could not understand.

Papa never spoke of sins at all. I do not know to this

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day what he would have considered a private sin. He had no sense of sin except in public life. A political grafter or a scab and all employers were his villains. Their shortcomings he looked on with passionate anger; ours he took with philosophy as long as we did not make too much noise.

Mama thought she was a devout Jewess and valued every scrap of ritual, but that was not her real religion. Her real religion was cleanliness and its rites, scrubbing, rubbing, dusting, washing. Her chief libations were hot water with suds of Babbitt's soap and Sapolio. It is because of her that I cannot stand seeing a chair out of place or dust in a corner. Trifles like these have complicated my life. Still it has been a comfort to me to think that I might be a better writer if I could only bear to see a pie in the bed.

Of course the women of our neighborhood had to make war every hour of every day against roaches, bedbugs, flies and mice. The houses were old; there were no screens; washtubs, toilets and other sanitary appliances were covered with wood; garbage systems were bad. Vermin could hide behind wallpaper; so Mama would never have any wallpaper in any of the rooms. All our ceilings were calcimined in white, and the walls of the bedrooms were painted a hideous greenish blue. Worst of all was the constant fight against lice. Going to school where some of the children were not clean, you took off your coat and hat, hung them in the closet—it was in the back of the classroom and had enchanting sliding doors—and there was no telling what would happen to your head unless you were watched. No child in our house could casually

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scratch her head without immediately being pounced upon. Once a week we were plumped into the stationary washtub in the kitchen and scrubbed from head to foot, with harsh yellow Babbitt's soap in our eyes and whining rebellion in our voices. Still Mama had no such fantastic cleanliness as the woman who scrubbed her eggs with Sapolio, or tied up her coins in tissue paper.

But Mama worked harder at this religion of cleanliness than she needed to. She enjoyed it. Surely we did not have to be dressed always in such stiff starched clothes. The weekly wash was huge. Sometimes there were as many as nine of our dresses, besides the mother-hubbard aprons which we wore when we got home from school. For best we had sailor blouses and skirts of embroidered cambric, and for school we had guimpe dresses of blue with white polka dots, or some such thing. Mama made all of them by hand and she was proud of the guimpes with sixteen tucks in front and sixteen tucks in back. Mama herself always dressed at home in starched cambric basque and skirt, and, like all the women of her time, her underwear and nightgowns were also white and stiffly starched. So were ours. Knitted underwear and sweaters with their saving of work were unknown. The ironing of the petticoats alone took hours. The only labor-saving device that Mama knew was the apron. She always wore an apron in the house, checked blue and white gingham at work, or white with a big bow at the back for resting. We, too, had little gingham ones to play in after we came from school. But our best aprons were made of black alpaca with a little bib and blue feather-stitching.

Mama would be pretty tired at the end of the Tuesday

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ironing, but none the less it gave her pleasure, just as she got pleasure from polishing her stove and teakettle. Each month when the landlady came to collect the rent Mama blossomed out proudly. Mrs. Van Horn was the most elegant person who ever came to the house, a trim nice-looking woman in her thirties. And Mrs. Van Horn told Mama that her kettle and her stove were the most beautifully polished in the whole neighborhood. When we read *Hans Brinker or The Silver Skates* for the first time, and told Mama about how these Dutch women scrubbed and polished, she thought Hans Brinker was a pretty fine book.

Like most Jews of her limited knowledge, Mama would tell you that the Jewish ritual method of preparing meat—of keeping meat and milk separate, of eating no pork—was based on cleanliness. This has been proved to be false. Sumner in his *Folkways* makes it clear that most of it is based on ancient and foolish taboos; that the pig was probably a sacred animal which was worshiped, and people do not eat sacred animals. From this, by way of a small transition, pigs came to be considered unclean. But Mama would never have believed that.

To Mama flattery was a form of lying, and therefore a sin. It was pretty nearly sinful even to say nice things that were true to people. Hungarians did that and Russian Jews, and so you could not trust them. Papa was likely to do that, too—it was one of the things in him that she did not like. Mama's ideas of honesty allowed no room for the gentle evasions of tact, and as for honesty about property, that was too rigidly set even to be questioned. She had a cousin who worked in a store. Clara was only

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sixteen years old and had not worked long. One day Clara found a ring in the aisle in front of her counter. She put it in her pocket and that night stopped at a jeweler's on the way home to find out if the ring was valuable. It was. The jeweler told her that it was worth several hundred dollars, as much as she could earn in a year. In Clara's mind a struggle began. She had no high opinion of her employers and she thought that if she turned in the ring they would keep it for themselves. What ought she to do? The easiest thing to do was to wait. Each day for three weeks she watched the Lost and Found columns in the newspapers, but there was no advertisement for this ring. She could turn the ring over to her employers, but, since she thought they would keep it, why should she make them such a present? She could sell it to the jeweler who had valued it that day. But that would be stealing—the ring did not belong to her. For weeks she went about torturing herself about this idiotic problem, not daring to say a word to anyone. Her solution was fantastic. One day in the store she simply took the ring and threw it down the toilet. And I assure you that she was no idiot.

Only then she told her family the story and wept bitterly with regret for the lost money. But she really felt easier in her conscience. All her relatives thought she had been mad. Mama was the only one who understood and sympathized with what she had done.

CHAPTER XIII

TWO WORLDS

FOR fifty years Mama lived in the city of New York, yet it played no real part in her life. Except for the mechanics of existence, her life would have been the same on a farm or in Germany—it would not have mattered where. The theaters, the politics, the music of the city did not exist for her at all. She lived through the Franco-Prussian War, the Spanish-American War, the World War, the Russian Revolution—and was touched by none of them. Her days passed in a kind of vacuum, walled in by her daily tasks and her children. The depression of 1893 meant to her that Papa could not get a job, and so we moved to Little Rock, but she did not think of it in terms of a depression. Papa could not get a job—that was the whole story. If you think her peculiar, you are wrong. Most women are like that. They are the women who in Paris during the French Revolution went on with their scrubbing and cooking or their shopping and dining. During the height of the Terror the Paris gazettes carried advertisements of new fashionable gloves, and women walled into their personal lives went out and bought such gloves—although of course they avoided the streets where the tumbrils rolled.

It may seem from this that Mama was insensitive, but not at all. Her feelings were hurt easily, and she walked with her head up, carrying her pride as peasant women

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in Europe carry a basket of fruit. This all her children have imitated. Mama did not know how to beg or to plead. She accepted the refusals of life as a matter of course and when things became too hard she took refuge in throbbing migraines. Even with these she did not lie down but would sit upright in her chair, her face flushed and her eyes shut, fighting off dizziness and pain.

Papa's mind was not closed in at all; his interest flew outward in all directions. I have never known anyone who talked so little about his own life and so much about the life of the community and the world. He was a part of the city of New York. He was emotionally involved in its political life. Wars and revolutions across the world moved him deeply. They had more reality than the things that went around him in his own house. He did not care what the vegetable man said when he gave Mama short measure—but what Bebel had said in the Reichstag, that was important. He did not notice that Mama had just scrubbed the kitchen afresh, but he knew all about the poor street-cleaning system of the city of New York as it was at that time.

The talk at our house was divided sharply into compartments, an inner one for Mama, an outer one for Papa. Mama told what she had paid for the chopped meat for dinner, and the difference it made when you basted the roast with a spoon, or covered it, or both. And she was upset because Papa was bored by all that and grieved because he never asked a question about her day. When she told him why there was so much laundry this week, or how Benny had torn his stockings, he looked at her blankly and turned to his newspaper without an-

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swering. She would not say much then, but when she went to bed that night, she would weep.

Yet she, on her side, was bored by Papa's talk. When he spoke of Socialism and the great Socialists, his face would become radiant. To my uncles, to his friends and to us, as soon as we were old enough, Papa spoke contemptuously of those traitors, the Knights of Labor, or passionately of the martyrs of the Haymarket massacre.

Most of the talk among us was ironical in tone. Papa never used irony. He was always serious, but the rest of us—Mama and all of us children—spoke mostly in a satirical joshing way, carefully keeping away from depth and reality and passing everything off in jokes. This way of skirting reality is common among American and among Jewish families. It is a form of reserve, and with the help of it sisters and brothers and mothers and children keep from knowing each other too well, while outsiders know them better than does anyone in the family. Perhaps it is just as well. To live in too full an intimacy with people whom you merely happen to be born next to must be a bad thing. So our talk, while it did not have the salty humor of the Russian Jews, was full of ready laughter and a kind of wit. But, like nearly all Jews, we were scrappy and argumentative. Mama hated that. She never argued and she looked weary and suffering when we did.

Sunday morning was the time uncles and cousins and other men dropped in to talk. Their wives were busy cooking dinner and wanted them out of the way. Fresh from the Sunday barber's shave, they came to talk or to pay back borrowed money. Regularly on Sunday morning

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Uncle Moritz, Mama's tall thin brother, would walk in. His manner had the condescending dignity proper to an uncle who had the most gentlemanly job of the family. He was not a workman like the rest, but a salesman in the silk department of a store. He had been at Ridley's when that was a fine shop on Grand Street, and now he was at Bloomingdale's, the most fashionable shop in the city. Silk clerks were the aristocrats of the store and made \$25 a week. That was a lot of money in our family, and so Uncle Moritz was the most important person among Mama's relatives. They all thought, and so did he, that it was a life job. He was handsome and tall, and in the regular run of things he would soon have been made a floor walker. But he too bet on the races. Bloomingdale's did not like it when they found it out, and he was fired. It was none of their business at all, but there you are. If I were an employer and wanted to hold on to the capitalist system, I should rather have my workmen gamble than think deeply on their economic problems. The more that workers find refuge in gambling or in liquor, the harder it is to get them to rebel. I know Papa both gambled and rebelled, but he had more dynamic energy than most people.

After he lost his job Uncle Moritz filled his days and made a meager living by a number of small, but always white-collared jobs. He was secretary of a couple of lodges of fellow-countrymen from his home town in Prussia. And at Passover he took orders for matzoths. He did this and that, but he never again stood safely in a job. As the years went by, he became a less dignified but a much nicer person until in his sixties, when all that he could rely upon failed him. Then he quietly got pneu-

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monia, and as quietly died.

Every Sunday morning the talk began the same way. As he came in the door, he rubbed his hands graciously and said, "*Nu, wie gehts?*"

"So-so, how are you?" Mama answered, pulling out a straight wooden chair—the only kind we had in the kitchen.

He patted the back of the chair to show that he noticed the attention, but he did not sit down in it. Instead he walked up and down the room with a long-legged stride. I know he must have sat down sometimes, but I cannot see him seated, only walking up and down.

"Not so good this morning," he said in his diplomatic salesman's voice, pushing out his lips and letting his face droop. "I've got a pain in my stomach."

Mama smiled. Papa said, "How about a little drink of kümmel?"

He stopped in his walk and hesitated. "Well, I don't think I'd—"

"Won't hurt you," Papa answered, and brought out the carafe and a little white glass. Uncle Moritz sipped the kümmel slowly, and then he always felt better.

Mama and he would discuss all our relatives, but they did not gossip. He wanted to, but Mama wouldn't. She thought gossip was one of the sins. She had none of the intense desire to look through people, not at them, which makes gossip so enthralling to me. Individuals hardly existed for Papa, so he never gossiped either. I must have got my love for it out of the air—certainly not from either of them. Mama would tell Uncle Moritz all about the chicken she was cooking for dinner, and how nice and

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fat it was, and would he stay? This was merely an empty though sincere enough courtesy; she knew that he would answer No. "Tsela has a fine piece of veal today. I picked it out in the market myself. No bones in it. I took time. No waste on it. White as snow. A fine piece. No, I got to get home. Shoulder of veal."

Mama shook her head. "I like better breast of veal, with a nice stuffing, not too much onion."

"Too much waste," said Uncle Moritz, "all bones."

In the intervals of talk Uncle Moritz asked Papa about some tip on the races. Papa had no use for tips but he went carefully into the chances for a combination on the second race the next day. After that had been treated with the proper enthusiasm, he picked up the morning paper and pointed to a headline. "Did you see this?" he burst out. "Nice business. No sooner is Harrison elected than he begins his monkey business. Might as well have that Tammany Hall crook Cleveland in. Well, you'll see. Next thing you know they'll be shooting down workmen."

Uncle Moritz would agree. Papa knew perfectly well that Uncle Moritz did not mind much what Harrison said or care what happened to Workingmen with a capital W. He did not think of himself as a workingman at all. He was a clerk, and so of a higher social standing. Uncle Moritz didn't care one way or another about politics. What difference could it make to his life who was President? But Papa's anger had been growing ever since he had read the news in the morning paper and he had to have an audience. Once started, he would go further afield to Gladstone and Ireland and the Russian Czar. Uncle Moritz agreed with everything. He liked to agree

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with people. If Uncle Samuel had been there, there would have been a fine hot discussion. Uncle Samuel would have taken the opposite side of anything for argument's sake, and it would have been fun. And Mama would have said, "Arguing again—always arguing. Always fighting," and she would have been upset.

So we children swung back and forth, from the little details of the kitchen to far-flung fights and rebellions. There was no other sort of talk. There was none about art or music; none about flowers or trees or animals. Because of Papa's pride in the accomplishments of the Jewish people, he would tell us about Heinrich Heine. So too, he would read Spinoza and tell us about his life and his philosophy. Mama had no such pride. She did not care about it one way or the other. She was a Jew, and that was fine. But that was all there was to it. She had no sense of inferiority and no need for justifying herself. She could not have told us what great men were Jews, but Papa could tell you about everyone. Papa had a sense of inferiority. And he had to bolster himself up by the accomplishments of other Jews. Pride in Maimonides, in Mendelssohn and Marx paid him a little for his own sense of failure.

CHAPTER XIV

MAKING OF A SOCIALIST

PAPA was not in any way like the sugary picture of the old-fashioned, gentle, bearded Socialist of fiction. I knew many Socialists and labor men when I was a young girl, and I have known many since, but I never saw one like that. Papa's Socialism, though not always clear, was never soft; and though passionate and intense, was never sentimental. Dreamer though he was, not practical, his Socialism had a hard core.

Because he was sure the new social order would come in this country by gradual slow change, Papa could be led into this and that promising side path. We are probably no brighter or clearer headed today. Some of us have merely seen into what morasses these side paths have led the world, and how the leading Socialists who walk upon them seem always to turn to the Right instead of to the Left. But Papa had a perfectly clear idea about the basic principles of Socialism. He understood the reason why profits must eventually ruin the capitalist system, and that it was a self-destroying system. He was sure that the failure of capitalism would come in his own lifetime. He began to talk to me about politics when I was only nine or ten years old. During the depression of 1893 he said "These capitalists have no faith in America. If they did wouldn't they start new business and end this panic? Dollars, that's what they have faith in."

But he could be switched away by a gilt-edged substi-

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tute—so he was for Henry George and the Single Tax, for the Populists and later for Bryan and Sixteen to One. The first big meeting I ever went to was in Faneuil Hall in Boston where Papa took me to hear Bryan, and I thought that he indeed had a golden tongue. But Papa was never for Theodore Roosevelt. He did not trust Roosevelt. Between the strokes of the big stick he knew that the loud Teddy was only trying to make Big Business behave as though it were a worthy but naughty child. There had to be some principle in the substitute that he thought would lead to the Left. He thought well of Tom Johnson because of his municipal ownership ideas. And of Emma Goldman and the Russian Nihilists. But he always came back to Socialism. In these emotional loyalties he was like most American Socialists of his time. When Henry George with his Single Tax program ran in New York, liberals, labor men, and radicals formed a united front to support him. They thought that the Single Tax was a step toward Socialism.

Papa knew that it was the capitalist system that was at fault, and not any individual. None the less, he was bitterly angry at rich men and their political followers. No matter how well a man knows that it is not capitalists but capitalism that is wrong, it is almost impossible to get along without a human villain. It is hard enough to get along without a hero. But even harder without a villain. Naturally Altgeld was one of Papa's heroes, and one of the earliest heroes I knew. I was only six years old when Altgeld pardoned the anarchists and released them from prison in Illinois. The year I was born, Papa had burned with helpless rage when out-of-work men in Chicago,

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meeting peacefully, had been framed by the police. He said that these working people had nothing to do with the bomb that exploded at that meeting. Why should they explode a bomb right there? And anyway he knew that few of the anarchists in America had any real idea of using violence. But the Chicago men were railroaded to the gallows or to prison where they stayed until Altgeld set free those that were left. Papa was happy about it, as were all the Socialist workmen in New York. They identified themselves strangely with the anarchists, although their ideas were entirely different. His honesty and decency ruined Altgeld politically. He was never elected to anything again. Because I was so young when I first heard about him, and because of what he gave up and the early end of his brilliant career, Altgeld has always seemed to me our most neglected American hero. Papa almost idolized Bebel and La Salle. Years later I went to a meeting at the old Hippodrome with him to hear Debs. It was the most exciting and moving meeting I have ever seen in my life, and I think Debs was the greatest speaker I have ever heard. Papa sat and listened while the tears ran down his cheeks. Later Lenin and Trotsky rose and stood with his gods. He had many villains, but in those early years Cleveland, Carnegie and Frick were the greatest of these.

On the whole, Papa was always on the Leftist side of the Socialist party. So he was for Daniel De Leon and the Socialist Labor group. He was fascinated by that strange, tall, handsome rebel. "De Leon! There's a man for you. If I could be like that. An educated man. Highly educated. To the universities of Europe he went. But he

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talks English like an American. He even taught at Columbia University—international law he taught—and you should listen to him, what a magnificent orator he is! A man like that. He looks like an American and he talks like an American and he's educated. And he's a Socialist anyway. That's the kind of man we want in the party. Too many Germans in the Socialist party in America. Got to have more Americans." But later, when Morris Hillquit and the *Volkszeitung* began to dominate the conservative group in the party, Papa turned to them and decided Daniel De Leon was too bigoted. Still De Leon always had his sympathy. If he were alive today, Papa would be a Communist rather than a Socialist.

The Bolshevik revolution in Russia made him happy. Someone once asked him if he wasn't pleased because Poland was once more a nation. The question astonished him. "What's Poland to me? What do I care about Poland, whether it's a nation or isn't a nation! The United States. That's the nation I care about." He thought it odd when people said that foreign-born radicals hated the United States and wanted to destroy its government. He loved this country so much that he wanted to make its government better. He wanted to make real the dream picture he had had of it before he left Germany.

That is true of nearly all radicals; we are never cynical enough to stop being surprised when reactionaries claim that this country belongs to them rather than to us. We are profoundly convinced, strange as it may seem to professional patriots, that we care about the good of the country as a whole, and that reactionaries are either mis-

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taken or that they care only about their personal advantage. In simpler words, that we want everybody in the country to have a fair chance and to make a decent living; we want everybody in the country to have enough to eat, and nobody to be overworked; and we think that reactionaries don't care about anybody but themselves and their small group of friends.

One of the centers of Socialist thought and propaganda was the Arbeiterkrankenkasse. This organization played a big part in the lives of German-American workmen. Its membership was Labor-Union and Socialist, but it was not officially a part of either group. Each member paid small weekly dues, and there were contributions besides from the more radical Labor Unions and from the *Volkszeitung*. The word *Arbeiterkrankenkasse* means "Workmen's Sickness Fund," and its object was to take care of its members when they were ill. What they would have done without it I cannot imagine. There was never a cent to spare for illness among the workmen we knew. If a baby was born, relatives lent a little to pay for doctor and midwife. And so in cases of other brief illness. But when there was a long illness, as when Uncle Albert was in bed for four months with inflammatory rheumatism, his family would have been desperate if the Krankenkasse had not paid a weekly benefit and supplied the doctor and medicines. Papa was never really ill, so that he got no financial benefit from his membership, but he did get a sense of insurance.

The nearest he came to being ill was when he had a tapeworm and neither little Dr. Berkheim nor the Krankenkasse doctor was able to cure him. One day he

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found a remedy in an old German almanac. You fasted one day to make the tapeworm weak, and then you took a pill, and then you ate a herring to make the tapeworm thirsty. He was proud of this discovery and gave it to many other people in a like fix.

The Krankenkasse gave the members a good deal of lively fun—balls and picnics and excursions. The picnics would be in some German beer garden, usually like Jones's Wood at Seventieth Street and the East River where there were a few trees and wooden tables and benches and rough grass that was mostly trampled hard earth. The balls were in bare little halls around Eighty-sixth Street and First Avenue, with benches around the wall for sitting. At one side of the hall there would be a big keg of beer. Of course the children went along too. Where could they be left? Everybody danced the hoppy German waltzes and polkas, that is, everybody but Papa. Mama and Papa seldom were able to go, but my uncles and aunts had many gay times. Papa cared nothing about this kind of social life. He could not dance and he did not like so much beer and there was never any real good talk at such parties. Mama liked them all right, but she was far too tired to go, even if she had been able to spend the money. She would say: "I call it a good time if I can sit back in a chair, quiet, with the children out of the way. By the time I get them all bathed and combed and dressed, I don't want to go anywhere." It seemed as though we could not get dressed without somewhere along the way getting into a noisy fight.

Once we all went—Mama and Papa and children, and my aunts and uncles and cousins—all of us on a big ex-

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cursion. We took a boat to Rockaway, then all trees and sand, and had a picnic lunch on the beach. I got sick in the swings. I suppose I should have looked silent and wonderstruck on the Atlantic Ocean. But apparently it made no impression on me at all. It was just water that the boat ran over. But, after all it was not my first sight of the ocean. When I was five I saw it at Coney Island, and it looked clean and sparkling and merry, with a lot of white sand and a wooden boardwalk and here and there a booth where grown people bought things and did things. There may have been popcorn and a rubber ball and a balloon, but I am not sure. These are vaguely mixed up with Coney Island which was then a small place. After Rockaway I didn't see the ocean again until I was nearly grown.

The cigar business in New York was almost all German Jewish. German Jews owned the factories and the little cigar stores with wooden Indians. They were the foremen, the cigar makers, and most of the bunch-makers. So that Papa's union was German Jewish, and from one end to the other it was Socialist. Samuel Gompers had belonged to Papa's Local and for a long time he worked next to him at the factory, but when Gompers became head of the American Federation of Labor, Papa thought all was lost. He guessed correctly in what direction the Labor Movement in America would go. He neither liked nor trusted Gompers and thought him a narrow, unprincipled politician.

I wish I could tell here something exciting about the strikes in the factories. But there was nothing exciting about them to us at home, and, except for the lift of

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being in a fight and of leading other men, there was not much excitement for Papa. Mostly, it was hard, slow, stubborn endurance. The cigar makers' union was too strong to need much picketing. There were not enough scabs who were first-class cigar makers to fill the jobs of the union men. So there was little picketing and no violence from the police. Papa talked about how cruel the Cossacks were in Russia. He read about it in the paper, and in those days no such idea occurred to him about the New York police. He thought them friends and workmen like himself. Certainly the police played no part in any strike in which he was mixed up.

At home Papa's being on strike was just like his being out of a job. We were short of money. The union paid a strike benefit, but it was never enough. It was never as much as Papa could earn when he was working. Strike benefits are always as large as the union can make them. If a union is strong and there has been no strike for some years, there is plenty of money in the treasury and the benefits can be big; but if the union is weak and the strikes come close together, there is little money and the benefits are small.

The worst time was when Papa led a strike that he won triumphantly. He won a complete victory and the men went back on their own terms. But the factory would not take Papa back, and the men did not stand by him. He got another job right away, but it made him bitter about the union for a long time.

Since then the cigar makers' union has almost petered out. Men do not smoke as many cigars. When Papa made cigars, only sissies, bad boys and Russian Jews smoked

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cigarettes in New York. Now everybody smokes cigarettes. When I was a little girl, only the roughest people smoked a pipe, though here and there a German was nursing a fine meerschaum. Besides that, cigar-making machinery got better and did away with the need of skilled labor except for good cigars. The better cigars are still made by hand, but few of them are made in the United States. The old skilled German cigar makers died out, and the young men found other work to do. Today the cigar makers' union is weak and helpless and is trying to make itself a part of a general tobacco workers' union.

We took the union for granted, and I still take unions for granted. I have a foolish surprise when I read in the papers that some group or other wants to destroy the union. Because I came to my radicalism as a child, through the road of trade unionism, there is a hard practical base to it which is often annoying to impatient young radicals who have reached their radicalism through the road of ideals.

Mama resented the unions. She resented the strikes. She resented the dues. She resented the time they took. In the middle of the week Papa would come home some night from work with his eyes shining with excitement.

"You don't need to fix any dinner for me to take along tomorrow," he said.

Mama looked at him surprised.

"Strike!" he said.

With a weary nodding of her head Mama turned away and went back to dishing out the dinner. Her mouth would quirk up at the left and she would keep nodding her head over the steaming pots. She was silent, but we could read

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her disgust and discouragement.

"Do you think I strike for the fun of it?" Papa said. "They're trying to take us off piecework. How much money can I earn if they do that?"

Papa did not strike for the fun of it, and the men did not follow him for the sake of adventure. They struck because they had to, to make a bare living. Just the same, at the beginning of the strike the men always felt very good about it. They were like children let out of school, not children playing truant, but children out of school for a good cause. All together they were fighting something stronger than themselves, and it was good for their self-respect. No one could make Mama believe that the union was a good thing for Papa. And of course if your aim is to climb out from being a workingman into another world, the union is not much help.

It is hard to untangle oneself from the clichés that bombard the mind. One of these clichés is that failures among workmen become radicals. This is not true. Among the workmen who came to our house, the highest paid and the most competent were always Socialists. It was the poorest craftsmen who were the hardest to convert. The best cigar makers, who needed the union least, were loyal to it; while the dubs who needed it desperately were contemptuous and often were scabs—not that any scabs ever came to our house. Another cliché is that the best workmen get rich while the bad workers stay poor. This also is not true. It is not the best craftsman in a factory who makes real money. The good worker is likely to rely on his trade and that does not lead to wealth. Skill and craftsmanship have nothing to do with making money.

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Naturally, just as soon as I knew the word, I became a Socialist, too. And naturally my Socialism meant nothing. The first election I remember was when Harrison defeated Cleveland in 1888. Voting was done in little rough unpainted wooden booths, each large enough to hold one man. The ballots were long and narrow and folded up small so that when they were opened out they were pleated like a small broken concertina. Election Day was a great day for children. It was for New York what a carnival day would be in Europe, or a big fair day in the country. The air was full of excitement and hope; voters we knew all really believed that this election was going to make a difference, that the country was going to be better because of it. Besides, it was a holiday. Hardly anybody went to work, and some of the men in the neighborhood made a few extra dollars by acting as clerks and watchers at the polls.

But the climax came in the evening when the streets of New York turned bright with bonfires. After the voting was over, the men in charge gave the wooden booths to the little boys. For weeks beforehand the boys had been gathering together all the wooden boxes and sticks they could get hold of. They had spent every waking moment outside of school hunting through cellars and in areaways for bits of wood and barrels. Many a bushel and barrel and box disappeared silently from vegetable stands and markets. Now with the big voting booths to pile on top, the evening was lighted with lively blazes.

And then the fun we had arguing about the election. In these fights there were only two sides—Republican and Democrat. Millie, the big strong dark girl, was a Repub-

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lican because her father was one. He made his living selling cigars to the local Republican Club. And Georgie, who was handsome and conceited, boasted proudly that his father was a Tammany Hall man. He had a hat store and sold hats to the local Democratic club. So that settled which side they were on. We did not fight for the Socialists. That would not have been any fun at all. Ten years later in New York a girl like me was likely to be ashamed if her father was a Socialist. She was ashamed because all the fine girls at school were Republicans. But in my day that had not begun. There were not enough Socialist fathers among us to make it exciting to fight for that side on election day. So we took sides with the others, largely depending upon which was the most fun to fight at the moment. We were ardent Republicans for a while because there was a nice song to the tune of "Massa's in the Cold, Cold Ground." It ran like this:

"All the Democrats are weeping.
Grover's in the cold, cold ground."

It was such a good song to sing that we had to be Republicans. But I always came back to Socialism. Socialism was heaven.

In my teens I grew out of my Socialism and rebelled against it, but later, through experience and logic, I came back to it. Still I know it is not all logical. Although it has a harder base and is better thought out than Papa's, there is an emotional content to it. Even though I have lived a bourgeois life since I've been grown, I was so conditioned that I can look at business or government only through a working-class window.

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Years later Dolly had a beau, a good-looking, pleasant young man. It was about the time of the Triangle Factory fire where nearly a hundred girls were burned to death because the doors were locked. Soon after came the Triangle Shirtwaist strike in which I picketed. For a few years I had turned almost conservative. The schools taught me shame of my foreign ancestry. The schools taught me notions of business—you spell it with a capital B, like God—and turned me to the Right. But after I went to work and saw what business really was, I turned once more to the Left; and the Triangle strike and what I saw there of the police gave me the final push. So one day when Dolly's beau came to see her I spoke fiercely about the low wages of the Triangle shirtwaist makers and how horrible the factory owners must be who would bribe the police to beat up girls. It turned out that the young man was a first cousin to the Triangle Shirtwaist Company—and Dolly lost a beau. She had said nothing about it one way or the other, but I suppose he blamed her for having such a sister.

In a book not long ago, an intelligent Liberal proved to himself that he could not flourish under a Communist society and therefore such a society would not do. I think it quite possible that this writer might find himself more comfortable under a Communist society, that he would have to work less hard and be less worried about his income. But that is not the point. What strikes me here is that he is so firmly fixed in the middle-class view that it does not even occur to him that a few middle-class people are of no importance by the side of millions of working people. And more, that there are men who are just as sensitive as he is, but who happen to be manual workers. If

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there were a violent revolution—I hope there never will be, but if there were—I should be blown away like a feather in the wind. I am not young enough nor strong enough to stand it. But suppose I were blown away—what of it? Suppose I and all of these middle-class tower-dwellers disappeared. What do we matter in the face of millions of people who are not getting enough to eat? How is this Liberal writer different from a fragile aristocrat of the *ancien régime* who stood up to Condorcet and said, “What would happen to *me* in a Republican world?”

It is inevitable that I should be emotionally involved whenever I hear of a strike. I flare up and burn with anger on the striker's side. I would be a poor person to take a part in labor disputes because I could not be cool and detached. I always get angry, and cannot help it. And when I am cornered in an argument, I am apt to say, “Well, anyway I grew up in the working class, and I know how they feel. I know what I'm talking about.” This, of course, is objectionable. There are even those who claim that I was not of the working class because we had middle-class ambitions, because I never lived in a slum and never starved, and was never dirty or quite desperate. It seems to me that this is drawing a fine line. It is true that we are not supposed to have classes in America, but we do have class feelings. Anyway I have class feelings and I have to go by that.

But in spite of all this emotion and enthusiasm, I have taken only a small part in labor or radical activities. And I think the reason is this: that every time I start to step forth into Papa's world, I am pulled back into Mama's. Papa would say: “Look what's happening in the world.

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How terrible that is! How marvelous this is!" While, in the face of crime and disaster, Mama would say, "Shut your eyes. Don't look." When we were walking along the street and she saw a dead cat in the gutter, she would say, "Don't look," and shudder away from it. How well it worked! My brother tells me that once, when we were playing in front of the house, there was a man who came running by. He was a wild sight, covered with blood, his face cut up, and the blood dripping onto his clothes. Behind him rushed a crowd, whether chasing him or curious I do not know. The terrified man dashed across the street and into a saloon; in a second he came flying out again through the swinging doors. It was one of the most startling things we had ever seen. Well, I give you my word, I do not remember one single bit of it. Mama's teachings worked well; our conscious minds can be obliging when they are highly shocked.

Yet, radical as I am, I can see that as a "proletarian writer" I must be a severe disappointment. I saw so little of dirt and depravity, and I have to confess that these years of my childhood were cheerful and pleasant. I believe that Marx was right when he said that starving people do not make revolutions. When people are pushed too deeply into the mud they have not the courage for rebellion. After all, it takes some physical vitality to feed courage. And half-starved people are simply not strong enough for revolt. Paupers cannot bring about a change in society, but workers will.

Many a sentence in this chapter would read more smoothly if I should say poor people instead of working

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people, but I cannot do it. We never thought of ourselves as poor. Skilled workers do not call themselves "destitute" or "poor." They talk about being hard up. I have often heard well-to-do middle-class people say, "I'm so darned poor," but a working man will say, "I'm a little short this week." They lack the sense of self-pity that is necessary before they can say "We are poor people," or "I'm poor." But being "hard-up" is just one of those things that might happen in life and therefore it is all right to say so.

CHAPTER XV

WHAT BECAME OF THEM ALL?

"RICH man, poor man, beggar man, thief; doctor, lawyer, Indian chief." As Dolly chanted each word, she touched one of the buttons that ran down the front of my jacket. The last button showed what I was going to be. She ended on lawyer, which to us was an almost meaningless word. Then I did the same for her and wound up on doctor. That meant that she would marry a doctor, somebody nice and round and rosy like little Dr. Berkheim. Our faces were serious because we had a notion that maybe the button might really decide our fate. Monday we might be lawyer; and Tuesday, thief. But for each day we accepted that day's decision. Sometimes we would gobble a few words so that we might end on Indian chief, which was our favorite. The girls did not really believe they were going to be an Indian chief. They knew that they would be married and have children, and that would settle their future.

Millie was the only girl for whom a career was planned. As a baby, she had had eczema and the wrong treatment had ruined her face with scars, so everybody knew she would never marry. It would be her awful fate to earn her own living. But for the scars Millie would have been handsome. From her father she had a tall strong body and dark good looks. From her mother, the little woman with buck teeth, she got a pleasant temper and a sparkle in her big black eyes. But it all went for little; the skin of her

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face was gathered and seamed like a waffle iron because of a doctor's stupidity. I don't understand how any girl so badly treated by life could be as good-natured as Millie was, so courageous and so full of lively vitality. We children felt sad about her. But she had something to make up for it. Her mother adored her, and although no man ever loved her, she was always surrounded by affection and kindness. As soon as her parents saw that she was going to be marked for life, they began to save pennies so that she could go through Normal School (now Hunter College) and become a teacher. The Normal School was free, but they had to save some money so they could get along without her help during the four years while she was there.

But she was the only girl of whom anybody expected anything. When it came to dreaming of the future, even Papa looked clear over my head and fixed his eye on Benny because Benny was a boy. Often and urgently I said I wanted to be a teacher, too. But nobody paid any attention to me and I didn't really take it seriously myself. It was a game I was playing. I wanted to be a teacher because a teacher was the most important person in our world; she was the boss of all the children; a teacher made heaps of money and had a long vacation. All the little girls said good-morning to her, and all the little boys tipped their hats. A teacher knew everything and was "refined." And best of all the teacher could boss everybody around and make them mind.

Dolly wanted to be a nurse. She always wanted to be one, but she never became one. Perhaps it was because to study nursing she would have had to live at a hospital for

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several years, and Mama couldn't bear to have any of her children live away from home.

Benny wobbled a bit. He wanted to be a policeman, but that was a grandeur a little remote. Next best would be to drive a street car. Driving a street car was one of our favorite games. We never played at being a cigar maker.

I do not know, of course, what became of all these children. Some of them have disappeared into emptiness. Of those I have been able to trace, most of the girls have done what was expected; they have been married. They do their own housework and live in the Bronx. But the babies we nursed when we played house have not materialized. I had seventeen cousins in New York. Among them all, these seventeen have only five children. Their husbands are not factory hands, but white-collar workers. None of the girls became an actress, none became a prostitute, none became a nurse, a lawyer, or a thief. All of them went on in the narrow respectability in which they had grown up. But none of these girls had much choice about what she would do or what would become of her. When she reached her teens, there was never any money to train her in a profession. She could have become an apprentice in a factory, but her mind was closed against factory work. She drifted into a store or office job, and from the job drifted into marriage.

What happened to Nina was, with a difference of details, what happened to all of them. At fifteen Nina was graduated at the grammar school. She liked pretty clothes and so her parents thought it would be a good idea if she would become a milliner, and they placed her as an apprentice in a small millinery store. There she was to be

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taught how to make hats in return for her work. She wasn't paid anything. But after three months her parents found they could not keep it up because there was ten cents carfare every day, and not a chance that Nina would get any pay for at least a year. So Nina had to leave the millinery shop. Without any trouble she got a job as a stock girl in an expensive Fifth Avenue store. There she made three dollars a week. And there she stayed for fourteen years, slowly being promoted, first to stock girl and then to appointment clerk. She liked the job and she liked the people and in the end, when she was making \$25 a week, she married one of the men in the place. After that she stayed at home and did her housework and cooked, and had a baby. The baby part of it was all right, but the housework was all wrong. She detested housework. She was the kind of girl who belonged in the country, farming or riding horses and playing tennis—anything that required outdoor athletic agility. Still, she gets along as well as do most people in the world. She does the job that is before her.

Sadie also drifted into a job. She started as a stock clerk too, but hers happened to be in an office, and while she was there she picked up the operation of a billing machine and became a billing clerk. She stayed at that until she was married. She is luckier than Nina, because she loves housework and cooking, and she is doing exactly what she is best fitted for.

Papa and Mama were sure that Benny was going to make a lot of money. Not because they thought that he had any special money-making talent, but because all the parents had the same idea about all their boys. The fathers

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had to believe their children would be rich. The thought that we, like themselves, would go through day-to-day fretting fear about money was unbearable—and therefore inconceivable. They did not think that we would ever worry where the rent was coming from on the first of the month. They thought we would live in one of those brown-stone houses and help our mothers and fathers. Though Papa knew Socialism was coming, he was not sure of the date of its arrival. And while we were waiting for it, it would be pretty fine for the children to become important and make a lot of money.

If you had money you'd get new shoes whenever you needed them, and you'd get a woman to help with the washing, and Papa wouldn't make cigars every Sunday, and you'd buy new curtains for the parlor, and you could own a little business, and the boss wouldn't be able to fire you whenever he felt like it. And you maybe wouldn't have to cook a big dinner for a hungry family when your head ached so you wanted to throw up.

Then, of course, they wanted money because they envied the people who had it. They envied people who rode around in carriages and who had servants and wore furs and diamonds. As for me, I envied girls who could take piano lessons or learn to play a violin. I envied the little girls who lived in a private house and who had a back yard of their own to play in, and the girls who could buy fine pencil boxes and black-bound notebooks and could have a plaid dress made by a dressmaker. Also the little girl who had a doll-house. I wanted the house although I would not have let any dolls get into it.

Far-off distant lofty objects of envy were the boys and

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girls who owned a pony cart. The children who drove in horses and carriages with footmen in the park were too remote even for envy. But we envied those who lived on Seventy-second Street near the park. And bitterly we envied children who had hoops to roll or who owned a tricycle.

"It ain't fair," we said, for them to have things we wanted and could not get. "It ain't fair" was our chief expression of disapproval, and it is depressing to think how many years of my life had to pass before I realized that though a thing wasn't fair, it might still go right on. Is it perhaps this that makes people think that when they have said, "But that's outrageous! It can't go on!"—that when they have said this, they have accomplished something toward abolishing an evil or an injustice?

Anyway, it was envy which gave me my first understanding of injustice, but it wasn't called envy then and it isn't usually called envy now. More often it is known as ambition. Under the name of ambition, envy is carefully taught in schools, and in books. Envy can be purely static, or, rather, it can turn inward and feed on the stomach and lungs and liver. Or it can turn outward and express itself in action, that is when it becomes ambition. Then ambition is envy dressed up to look nice.

But Papa and Mama went quite the wrong way about training us to get rich. We had before us one or two examples of poor people who gathered together a good deal of money. But neither Mama nor Papa admired these people. They thought them cheap and mean, and Mama was shocked because one of the women saved money by buying spoiled food for her children. And they did not admire

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the woman with the diamond rings on her hard dirt-ingrained fingers. They thought that people who cheated and squabbled and struggled over a penny were disgusting. It seemed to us that Mama squeezed her pennies, but we were wrong, she was only sensibly economical, which Papa was not. And so they started us on the wrong road, because the poor cannot get rich unless they are mean and cheap. The ones who come on an oil well or invent something are too few to matter. And so, too, in spite of all the talk about getting rich and all Mama's trying to count every penny that she spent, I did not become a miser; I never even learned how to save money.

Of course we had our little savings banks for pennies, but they were always in a pitiable state of bankruptcy—even when we had a fine one that looked like an apple. That failed, too, after a week.

I have a friend who has made something of a fortune by his brilliance in a difficult business. He says, "I know I'm stingy. I can't help it. I was so damned poor as a boy. I can't get over my fear of the poorhouse. I had it as a child, and I can't get away from it." He is sick in spirit with fear of poverty and has to be regarded like any other sick person. Being poor as a child is not the source of his illness because if it were, I would be the same way. Yet the effect on me has been just the opposite. Where being poor made him stingy, it has made me foolishly extravagant. Probably when my friend was a boy, he saw some old woman going to the poorhouse, and he knew that the most powerful person in his village was the banker who had money piled up. I never saw anything like that. If I throw money about, it is because I never got the idea as a child

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that money was a defense or that it was a source of power. I got the idea from Mama as well as Papa that money was something to buy things with—and the things you bought showed the world you were somebody.

Benny did not become rich. When he got through the grammar school he found a job as an errand boy with a concern which imported laces from Switzerland and sold them wholesale. He was a bright, nice-looking little boy, with an agreeable personality. And so he got on well. The only trouble was that he got on too well, for he was promoted until, at twenty, he was a traveling salesman, making sixty dollars a week, which in buying power would be as much as a hundred dollars now. His expenses were paid while he was on the road, so he traveled in comfort and stayed at good hotels. Drawing all that pay when he was only twenty, he thought he was a big successful business man—and so did we. All it really amounted to was that his firm had such good standing that Benny had only to see customers and be agreeable. But he did not realize that, and the success went to his head. When something happened in the office he did not like, he quit in a huff, sure that some other house would snap up his valuable services at once. To his dismay he found that other houses could get along quite comfortably without him. And then came his bad years. Sometimes he was out of a job for a year at a time. He tried house-to-house canvassing. He went on the road selling some kind of cooking oil to replace lard. He opened a little lunchroom. All he got out of that was that he learned to open oysters as well as any fish man.

About this time something better came along. He got

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a good job with a small wholesaler where he began to do well at once. It seemed as though at last he was settled for life. He was making good. He was learning the business and he was selling goods; he liked the boss and the boss liked him. But that is how the trouble started. The boss not only liked him—he liked him too much. The pattern repeated itself. In the wholesale lace house Benny got on too well, and now the boss liked him too much. The owner of this factory was as generous and sweet a person as I have ever known. But he had a daughter, and in an old-fashioned Jewish way it seemed to him that it would be fine if his daughter should marry Benny, and then Benny and his daughter could inherit the business, and everything would be all fixed up. The world looks cynically at a man who marries the boss's daughter, saying that he does it for money. I think that judgment a little harsh. Probably what really happens is that to some men money surrounds its possessors with glamour. To them the boss's daughter really does look more beautiful, more charming, more alluring than a girl without money. They do not marry her to get money. They marry her because they like her better, and sometimes they like her better because she represents to them money and power.

Unluckily, for Benny money had none of this glamour, even though this time the boss's daughter really was a pretty girl. Benny, with his family's capacity for slipping away when there was money to be made, had already fallen in love with somebody else. When this was explained, the boss took it in good part and said everything should go on as before. But that turned out to be impossible. You cannot reject the boss's daughter and still hold

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your job. Relations got strained. And so once more Benny started on his hard road.

After this fiasco it occurred to Benny that he ought to learn some trade. He studied accounting and got a job as a bookkeeper where he worked at cut-rate wages for twelve and fourteen hours a day. After six months of it he began to wear glasses; after a year his health broke down and he had to go to a hospital for several weeks. The round of little jobs and odd jobs and being out of a job started again. By this time he had got pretty thoroughly discouraged, so he did what only desperate men do. He set out to sell industrial insurance. Among clerks and salesmen this is considered just about the toughest and meanest job there is. At that hard and grinding work he has made a reasonably good living ever since, usually by working fourteen hours a day six days a week—and half a day on Sunday. He can stand it better than the bookkeeping job, although the hours are actually longer, because he is an active person and this job keeps him on his feet, while the bookkeeping kept him sitting in a chair.

Josey, the gawky thin boy with red hair who was so funny and always amused us with his antics, started just as Benny had, but was luckier because he did not get on as fast. Instead, he kept on slowly until he became the owner of one of the little wholesale houses where he worked. Georgie, the conceited good-looking boy, became an errand boy in an office and from there went on to being a pompous clerk, and as far as I know is one now. One of the boys happened to get a job as an errand boy in a brokerage house, and he stayed there until he reached his peak as a telephone operator on the floor of the Exchange.

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Then he got tuberculosis and his employers sent him up to Saranac. That was fifteen years ago, and his Stock Exchange employers are still sending him a comfortable income at Saranac. This boy hated the indoor work on the Exchange and he might have kept on working if he had had an outside job.

That is the way things went with most of the boys on our block. None is a banker, an artist, a professional man, and none became a gangster. Here and there is one who has a small wholesale business. Few of these boys and girls really did what they were best fitted to do. Few of them had any chance to find out. How can anyone find out what he is fitted to do when he cannot even stay out of a job one month to make an experiment?

It may seem odd that among all of these, not one child became a worker in a factory, and more, that none of the children learned any trade. None of the girls is a dressmaker or milliner; none of the boys is a carpenter or plumber. It did not occur to any child on our block that he might become a cigar maker, or that he might work in a cigar factory or a cigar store or even that he might own a cigar factory. And it did not occur to our parents either. Yet each of our fathers had a trade. They were cigar makers or hatters or furriers. And some of our mothers had been dressmakers or cooks. But our parents had all tried to climb out of the working class into the middle-class and had failed. Now they wanted their children to do it for them. To be a workman was to be a slave. But if you owned your own business, they thought, or if you had your own shop, then you were independent and then you didn't have to listen to the boss. That was the big

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thing—to be in such a place in life that you would not have to listen to the boss.

If Benny had gone into a cigar factory to work, Papa and Mama would have been crushed by failure and humiliation. What, after all, had a trade done for Papa? The living he made was poor. He could wear a clean collar only once or twice a week. He had to go to work in old clothes. And he was not even as well paid as a white-collar clerk. The clerks were superior socially, because they had to know English better and because they could be better dressed at their work, and they shaved nearly every day. The idea was that you climbed up from being a workman. You became a white-collar worker, and then you became the boss. This was so clear that it went without saying.

And having a trade did not make Papa even safe. Bright socially-minded people say that if unskilled workers would only learn a trade they would be better off. I know that the men who did have trades when I was a little girl were always on the edge of danger; they were always in fear of losing their jobs. As the machines got better the men with trades had less and less chance. Still, their trades did give them some (not too much) self-respect.

It must seem odd, too, that none of these children went to college. Boys and girls of the middle classes who are just as poor as we were, and some who are poorer, manage to go to college. And it must seem to the stranger that these children I tell about could have gone to college too if they'd had enough ambition and energy, that they too might have had some professional training. But there is a big difference between these children and the children of middle-class professional people. I know what that differ-

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ence is, not from any theory or from any figures dug up by research workers, but from what happened to me. The child of a preacher is likely to be poor. But his father has connections somewhere, or friends who are at some university, or he knows someone else who has something to do with giving out scholarships. Either his father or a friend will point out to the child how to find his way to college and how to work his way through it if he wants to. The poorest doctor can show his daughter how she can get through college, and he probably has friends who can get her a temporary job in the summer or who will know the cheapest college and the best way to get through without much expense. A workman's child is not likely to know anybody who can be of any help.

I wanted to go to college badly and I got as far as taking the entrance examinations at Radcliffe, but there I had to stop. I tried to find work that would help me through, but I never could. There was nobody to tell me how to get such work, how to get a scholarship or how to borrow money to help pay expenses. I was eighteen years old and there wasn't enough money to pay even carfare. But Papa and Mama had worked so hard to get me that far along that if they had known anybody who could have got me some temporary work or lent me a little money, we could have managed a while longer. But since there was nothing of that sort, I gave it up and went to work.

I was just a child eager to learn but not knowing which way to go about it. Perhaps someone a little shrewder than I and less lost in books might have found a way. The qualities which made it worth while to give me a better education made me less fitted to get one for myself. And

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then, too, I had no desire to live in messy, dirty dark little places or to starve my way through. My appetite was excellent but my digestion was good and I could have done well enough on doughnuts and salami and bananas. But I couldn't ask for help or for money—and if I had been able to, there was no one to ask.

I know now that I was a fool to care so much about going to college. But it is not the intrinsic value of college education that makes for class distinction. Every young person out looking for his first job today can tell how sharp a line is being drawn between those who have a college degree and those who have none. It is this sort of thing which fixes class lines as generations go by.

CHAPTER XVI

PAPA IS PROMOTED

So until I was eleven years old, our lives ran along, even and set to a pattern, the pattern of the workingman's narrow life in New York. Then suddenly the pattern was torn to pieces and the wind that blows jobs about tossed the pieces far South and West into Arkansas. And thus we became different from what we would have been if we had always lived in New York.

The change began with a surprising and joyous promotion. Papa was made a foreman. For several years he had worked in a cigar shop on Second Avenue, and lately he had become friendly with the superintendent there, a man named Mr. Krone. I realize with surprise as I write this that Papa was then only thirty-three and Mr. Krone, who seemed an old man, was probably forty-five. Mr. Krone played the races as much as Papa did, but he did not bother to study the racing sheets. Relying on Papa's nightly research, he won a few bets, and so they became inseparable companions. Mr. Krone took him to fine restaurants where they ate big steaks and dozens of oysters on the half shell. The oyster was one of the foods forbidden to good Jews, and so naturally Papa liked it especially. Mr. Krone was shrewder than Papa, and he was careful to keep his gambling a secret from the boss. Delighted to be able to work with larger sums, Papa did the actual betting for both of them, while Mr. Krone kept in the

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background. Papa was too free from guile to realize that Mr. Krone was using him as a shield. It looked better for the superintendent to associate with a foreman than with one of the workmen, so he had Papa promoted. That was easy enough because, as a good and intelligent worker, he was in line for promotion anyway. The only thing that had kept him back was his labor union activity.

Papa was delighted. For years he had looked forward to this promotion. He had expected it, had planned for it, and now when he was only thirty-three, he was on the way to success. The road to the future was open at last, and he saw it climbing steadily to a peak. Papa was always an optimist. That goes without saying; otherwise he could not have been a gambler. Next thing he'd be superintendent, and then he would own a shop. And so for a while he forgot his other ambitions.

For us at home it was wonderful. As foreman Papa got twenty-five dollars a week, and at once there came a change in our lives. And Mama was so happy. This was no dangerous racing business; this was the way a good husband should get ahead. Here and there a little thing was bought for the house—a green plush album for the parlor, a new huge black iron pot for the soup. Dolly and I each got a new dress, the first ones we'd had made by a dressmaker. They were the color of cinnamon—perhaps that is why the first time I went to Paris I came back with two cinnamon colored dresses. And Mama got the nicest outfit she had ever owned—a black tailor-made suit with thin white stripes, plain and severe and most becoming to her plump figure with its small waist and round hips. This was fortunate, because she wore it for ten

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years. And she got such a lovely hat to go with it. It was a bonnet of black lace, with ribbons tied under her chin, and blue forget-me-nots around the crown. That hat of hers made us all radiantly happy. We thought it was the prettiest thing we had ever seen in our lives.

And so everything was fine for a while. Mama managed to save a few dollars. Plans were made. Pretty soon she was going to have a laundress for half a day each week. At last she would get her sewing machine, and Papa would get a new suit, we'd all get new shoes at the same time for Passover, and this month she could send a few dollars more than usual to her mother in Prussia. It was then that we took our few dancing lessons. And how proud we were with the other boys and girls. Oh, it was splendid! And then it all ended sharply in one hour, in one minute.

We had come home from school and were sitting about the table having our afternoon coffee and rolls, when the door opened and Papa walked in from the hall. His face was heavy; the old Polish gloom had settled down on him deeply once again. All of us knew instantly that something bad had happened. Even Benny did not jump up to run to him. It could not be that he was sick, because he did not lie down on the sofa. Yet it was only the middle of the afternoon. Either the factory had closed or he had lost his job.

Mama said, "You laid off?"

"Of course," said Papa.

"Is the factory closed?"

Papa shook his head without a word.

"Oh," said Mama, "so you're laid off." She sat perfectly still, or she seemed to be sitting still, but I saw that

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she was trembling as she held herself stiffly upright in her chair. Her cheeks were always rosy, but now, all of a sudden, her face was red all over, the way it always got when she had one of her headaches. For a minute there was a heavy silence in the room, and then Mama said in a resigned voice:

"Playing the races. I told you the boss would find out!"

"Why shouldn't I? Krone plays the races and he's a superintendent. Why shouldn't I play? I'm a foreman."

"Mm! Krone! A fine friend!" Mama shrugged. "Fine friends you always have. I told you not to trust that man. He's smart all right. He doesn't go around talking big all the time, letting everybody know what he's doing." The red was gone from her face. It looked white the way it always was after one of her sick headaches. She looked as though she would cry if she said another word. She got up and started to clear away the cups and I heard her say in a whisper, "Fine friends!" But after a minute she turned back and said, the words coming hard, "Do you want a cup of coffee?"

Papa shook his head without answering, and, strange action for him, he went into the parlor and sat down there all alone. He did not close the door.

Since I have been grown up and have been able to know things about Papa by watching myself I know that one of the reasons for his spells of gloom was that he had an intense need for privacy and he could not have it in a workman's flat with four children. There is no room to be by yourself for a few hours. If Papa had shut the door that day, Mama would have been hurt and astonished. Why should anybody want to go off and sit by himself as though

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the rest of the people in the house weren't good enough? Papa, who had lived alone from the time he was thirteen until he was married, got his solitude when he went for long walks by himself, or when he spread out his newspaper and hid behind it. I know that my childish ill tempers disappeared just about the time that I had a room of my own.

In the parks of any big city on mild evenings men sit about aimlessly on the benches. They are alone, they are not talking or doing anything. Sometimes they are reading newspapers. These are not shabby out-of-work people, but decently dressed men who look like workmen. They come to these parks for the empty, silent sitting because their homes are crowded and this is the only way they can get solitude.

But after losing the job he had waited for so many years, he was too miserable to go for a walk or read the paper, so he went by himself into the parlor. He stayed there until supper time, and when Mama called him for supper he came in and, as always in his black moods, ate in a hurry what she put before him, his head bent over his plate, without a word. But this disaster was too terrible for silence, and Mama had to speak.

"Say something! What happened?"

"It wasn't the betting on the races." His voice was rumbling and heavy. "That wasn't what made the trouble. It was because I was on the side of the men. What do you expect? Expect me to jump on the men if there's something wrong? Expect me to take the bosses' part? I'm no spy. I can't watch every workman and see what he takes out of the factory every night."

"Watch every workman?" asked Mama.

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And then it came out. There had been a shortage of cigars. It had been running for several weeks, and Papa hadn't been able to trace it. So they blamed him, and that was the end of everything. He had been made the victim.

"So your friend Mr. Krone didn't take your part either?"

Papa looked black and said nothing.

Well, they were both right. Playing the races had something to do with it, and being on the side of the men had something to do with it. But each of these was only part of the whole reason, just as each of them was only part of Papa's character.

"A head always in the clouds," said Mama, "thinking about some horse and how he's going to run."

Papa's head was always in the clouds, but it would have been in the clouds if he had never bet on a horse race in his life. It would have been in the clouds, dreaming of a social paradise or spending his imaginary million dollars. Or, if his place in life had been different, pondering on the breaking up of an atom or on a contrapuntal experiment in music. Experiment is the word. Whatever he had done would have been on the *new* side of things. And he would have been fighting for something. Fighting hard for the new, and fighting with his head in the clouds. A man like that could not possibly be a foreman and drive other men and watch their work and count their cigars and make sure they took no more than the six allowed them each night. Under his eyes cigars would most certainly disappear.

But this whole thing was more serious than just losing the job as foreman. To begin with, it meant that there was

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no future at all for Papa in a cigar factory. If he could not make good as a foreman and become a superintendent, he certainly could not face the thought of being a cigar maker all his life long. Besides, even if a man wants to, it is always hard to step down from a bigger job to a smaller one. Papa had been foreman, so now he could not get a job as a cigar maker. And this was the year 1893, and the country was in a financial panic. A man had to be an extra good worker to get a job and he had to have some luck in the bargain.

And then, pat, came a letter from Uncle Max, Papa's brother in Arkansas. He wrote that he had gone into business for himself and needed somebody to help him whom he could trust. He wanted Papa to take the job. No one belonging to Papa lived in New York, but there were three brothers in Little Rock—all younger than he. Each of them had stopped in New York to visit us on the way from Poland and each of them had hated New York and hurried on to Arkansas. Their own Uncle Louis had been there years before and had made money and had gone back to Germany. So Arkansas must be a good place. Just before Papa had been made foreman, Uncle Max had come to New York on a visit. He told us about his beautiful wife, and his baby, and he bought Mama a present—a fine black plush cape, quite the most handsome thing she'd ever worn in her life.

The pleasant picture of Uncle Max that comes out in this visit is not my picture at all. In my childhood Uncle Max was a dark and mysterious figure. His memory is surrounded by shades, by black and stormy clouds, terrible and remote. Though in Little Rock we lived in the same

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house with him for eight months, I never knew him; he was always a silent stranger walking about, a man with terrible angers.

They said that he had killed two or three men—they spoke thus loosely of the number of men a man killed in the Southwest of that day. But I doubt it. Uncle Max, though he was a small man, had a face so terrible in anger that I can quite believe that he never needed to kill anyone. His hair was light brown and his eyes gray, but his look was black. There are people like that. There are some men who are never insulted; they look too dangerous. Maybe there was some sordid, some plain and simple reason for his dark moods—perhaps like Papa he felt lonely and unloved—but whatever caused the moods, they lay on him like a pall, and he frightened us. I might have found an answer; Uncle Max might have come out of the blackness into clearer light; but about five years later, when he was in the jewelry business in Tennessee, he had to go through bankruptcy. The gun he always carried was too handy. He used it to shoot himself. So Uncle Max has remained for me forever in the shadows, grim, silent, doomed. Like a figure in Dickens or Hardy.

When the letter came, Papa caught fire at once. Here was the way out. Here was a new idea. A whole new world! There were millions to be made in Little Rock.

When I first read Mark Twain's book about Colonel Sellers, I did not think it was funny at all. I'd known Colonel Sellers a long time, but I had called him Papa. There were always millions in every new scheme for Papa, and he rode high on enthusiasm each time, never learning anything from the failure of the time before. The little

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candle in the stove was always a blazing fire for Papa.

"Millions!" Mama heard the familiar word and her spirit sank.

"Well, maybe not millions—there's a big future anyway. And away from the city." Papa had always wanted to live in the country. "Don't you want a house?" he asked. "Don't you want a garden?" But there were bigger things. "Don't you want me to be a business man? That's the way men got to be millionaires. The men who came to this country when it was new and the land was cheap."

Under the flaring gas light Mama sat darning stockings. She kept right on without looking up, and she said in a tired voice: "You'll have to do what you think best. I don't want to say anything about it, one way or another." Inwardly she was weeping. She was impaled in martyrdom. But she could not say, "No, I don't want to do that," or "I don't like that way." She had to say, "Do it your way." But by the tone of her voice you knew what she meant. This exasperated Papa and besides, at this moment, he was quite beyond listening to tones of a voice. Little Rock was new. His brothers were there.

Mama made only one feeble protest. She said: "But it's a saloon. You can't work in a saloon."

"Sure I can," said Papa. He thought of all the men who would come and go in the saloon. And he thought how lively it would be to talk to people all day long—all the fine American strangers he would meet. Mama said nothing more. And the very next day Papa left for Little Rock.

A wave of excitement ran about through the flat. The unbelievable was about to happen. We were to go away

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off to a new place to live. Little Rock—the capital of Arkansas. Would there be Indians? It was a revolution. The most amazing part of it was that all the furniture was to be sold. Within my memory this furniture had been there always. It was fixed, as Mama and Papa and the family and me. The red plush sofa in the parlor, the round brown table in the kitchen, the big walnut beds—they all seemed to be part of me. It was strange to see these things suddenly come apart from me and go away on their own.

One day two men came and paid Mama \$150 for everything in the flat—the three beds, and the bureau and washstand with the marble tops, and the sweet cups with the rosebuds on them—everything except the feather beds and the gilt-framed pictures of Grandma and Grandpa and the green plush album and the new sewing machine and the brass candlesticks that Mama had brought from Germany. I can still see a man's two hands going up and lifting off the wall the "God Bless Our Home." It was a big sampler, done in many colors and framed in a wide walnut frame. In the middle was a sweet gay little house with trees around it, and over the top and bottom of the house, ran the words "God Bless Our Home." In my mind there was a mixed-up notion that this flat and home and this sampler were all one thing. That you could not have home without the "God Bless Our Home" picture. So I was confused.

The \$150 stayed in my mind all these years because it seemed so huge to me. But to Mama, though it was the biggest lump sum she'd ever had, it did not seem much. It was a little price for the four walls of her life, for the building she had put up so carefully in her cautious spirit.

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Looking white and always as though she were trembling, Mama got our cheap trunk up from the cellar. It was a small trunk, but it was plenty big enough to hold all the clothes we owned except the few things we wore. While all this was going on we went to stay with Tante Berta. It took three weeks to settle everything, and during these three weeks Mama cried day and night. How could she leave New York? In New York she was protected from the antagonistic American and Christian world by the phalanx of her brothers and sisters and cousins. In Little Rock she would be without protection. Papa gave her no such feeling because he himself was always turned outward toward the Gentile and the American world. Years later, when her children had grown up, Mama entrenched herself behind them; and, so fortified, she dared to do many things which she had never had the courage to do when she was young. Safe behind her children, when she was seventy years old, she bobbed her hair and learned to play bridge, and began a new existence.

Mama would not live in any neighborhood that was mostly Jewish because she wanted to live in brighter and less crowded sections. But she wanted to be with Jews—to spend her life with them.

It is a bad thing for the world when Jews live clustered together in a community and deal only with each other but I can see quite clearly that it may be not so bad for the Jews who do it. When the Ghetto was enforced by law in medieval times the Jews as a group had to suffer under sharp restrictions, but each Jew individually in the Ghetto was backed by every other Jew in his fight for existence. They turned toward each other and so, while they suf-

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ferred as a community for being Jews, they did not suffer so much as individuals.

Now that there are no more Ghettos by law, Jews often segregate themselves in a neighborhood or in their personal lives, live only among other Jews and deal only with other Jews, both socially and in a business way. Many people who do not understand think it's because they like dirty and crowded places. But this is not the reason. Jews themselves do not always quite realize why they do cling together in neighborhoods, but it is, I think, to protect themselves from the humiliation and the danger of dealing with people who look down on them. Dealing with each other, they support each other against the outsider. It works the same way with groups of other immigrants. At first the Irish all lived together, and then the Germans, and now the Greeks and Hungarians and Roumanians. They live in the same community and they give each other jobs, and they dance and play cards and have parties and marry each other.

The Jew who breaks away from the Ghetto, like the Italian who breaks away from the immigrant section, has to face the world on his own feet without the support of people like himself. Not that Mama figured this all out; she could not have told it to you in words, but she knew it and acted on it.

So with her lip caught between her teeth, Mama packed the imitation leather valise that looked like an oblong box covered by another box, with wide straps holding the two together. In it she put a change or two and a blanket for the baby, who was only a year and a half old, and big boxes of hard-boiled eggs and corned beef and rye bread

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and cakes and cookies—all the food we needed on the trip. At last came the day. It was a bright day in April. She had picked a Sunday when none of her relatives would be working. Escorted by uncles and cousins, our caravan started for Little Rock. Mama led with Uncle Samuel carrying the baby, and the rest of us came on behind. We went downtown on the elevated train and crossed on the ferry to Jersey City. Every bit of the way after we left the elevated was new to us. We children were in a state of almost unbearable excitement. The packing. The moving. The sleeping at night at Tante Berta's. The ferry. The river. The railroad station. It was beyond belief. But the peak of excitement came when we were standing in the depot waiting, and down the track, straight toward us, came the belching, smoking, bell-ringing engine.

"Keep away from it," called Mama. "Come here." But she had no need to worry. We stood entranced, paralyzed with delight. Those old engines made such a fuss. They had good big smokestacks, sputtering out sparks like a sky-rocket. They made traveling worth while to a child.

CHAPTER XVII

WORM ROSES

UNCLE MAX owned the White Horse saloon—the biggest in Little Rock, with gambling rooms upstairs for poker, craps, Black Jack and faro. There was a part set aside for Negroes; they went there as well as whites.

Standing here on this page those words look simple, but it has been hard for me to write them. For weeks I have been almost stopped on this book, fighting shy of Uncle Max and his saloon. I have made every excuse to myself: I've been ill; I've been tired; I've been in the wrong mood—anything rather than tell that Uncle Max owned a saloon. Fooling myself with excuses because I was ashamed of the saloon.

I did not own the saloon; I never even saw it; I only knew Uncle Max for a few months of my life, and that many years ago. And yet I was ashamed. I thought that, once the words were down on paper, I would have better sense and the shame would disappear. Yet I could not write them. I tried first telling them to a friend. I said: "I can't seem to write this. Uncle Max owned a saloon and gambling hell. Negroes went there as well as white men. Papa worked for Uncle Max. I'm ashamed of all that. It's hard for me to write it."

I thought she would say: "What do you care? It wasn't your saloon." Or would even perhaps offend me by vicariously enjoying it—by saying: "Oh, isn't that thrilling? I

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wish I had had something exciting like that in my childhood. I only went to Blah Blah Girls School—so dull.” But she did neither. She was interested. “That’s funny—because my father felt exactly the same way. His grandfather owned a gambling hell in Wisconsin in pioneer days. He was so ashamed he hid it from us.”

Her father is a banker and his father was a banker but his grandfather banked only in a roulette game. “Father kept it so secret that I was fifteen years old before I found out about it. You should have seen how surprised he was at the way we took it. We had longed for a pirate, but a gambler was the next best thing. Of course we were a generation farther away than Father. Maybe he was too close to it. Certainly he would never have told us anything about it. We’d never have found it out unless we had dug it out for ourselves.”

“Little Rock was still something of a pioneer town when we were there,” I hastened to answer, not really quite cured. But now I can go on with the story.

The trip down from New York on the train has passed almost altogether from my memory. I remember no events in it, not even sleeping in the big red velvet chairs for two nights. Everything went smoothly and there were no dramatic hooks to hang remembrance on. When we woke up in the morning, the train was hurrying toward the Appalachian range in Pennsylvania, and there ahead stood my first mountains. I was amazed that they had no pointed tops. I bet volcanoes have pointed tops. I was surprised that the states did not change color at the border lines like the maps in the geography. Still, it was a big

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thing to say to each other, "Now we're in Pennsylvania." "Oh, look, now we're in Ohio." "Now we're in Indiana." Thoughts like that—but no events.

We were three days and two nights on the way, and nothing happened. Jenny did not cry. We did not lose anything. No one was ill. Without a hitch we left our train at St. Louis, waited two hours, got on another train and rolled on our way. But from the moment we got to Little Rock, things did not go well. When Mama stepped down on the platform, holding Jenny in her arms, neither Papa nor Uncle Max was there. The three of us followed, each carrying a paper box or something. And then the conductor, who had been so friendly, put down the valise and said, "Good-bye, good luck."

We stood there on the long narrow platform of gray and dirty planks. The depot was strange and raw, and Mama, looking around searching for Papa, saw no one but Negroes—a crowd of dark faces. There were few Negroes then in New York, and she was uneasy. Anyway it was breakfast time, and she had not had her morning coffee, and it was hot. Suddenly Papa came hurrying down the platform, his head pushing forward before his body, even more eager than usual, and his face ablaze with joy. We ran to him and jumped up and down.

Uncle Max came, too, and said, "Now, come on, let's get into the buggy." We looked at him, and Papa explained, "Buggy is what they call a carriage down here." A carriage! We were actually going to ride in a carriage? It would be the first time in our lives. The carriage was rich-looking, clean and new, and it had a light tan flat top with a fringe all around like a pony carriage, but was

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much bigger. And Papa said: "Look at the horse. She's a fine horse." She was—and much too spirited a creature to be drawing children around. We got in proudly, and Uncle Max drove a long way before he turned in through a gate and we got out. I have been told that it was early morning, and that as soon as we got to the house we had breakfast. But I do not remember it that way. My memory is all wrong in its facts, but I am sure it is right in the picture it makes of what was going on inside my mind. This is the way I remember it.

It was dark when we arrived and not bright morning, and in front of us was an immense looking house. We had driven around to the back and there was a porch shaped like an L that seemed to run on interminably, all in dark shadow. Everything was shadow and everything was tall and long and far away. I was alarmed by this immensity. It seems to me that I was sleepy and that I then went to bed.

I remember the next morning in a quite different way. I got up and washed my face in the first bowl and pitcher I had ever seen in my life, hurried with my clothes, came downstairs half-buttoned, ran to Mama and said, "Where's the place where we came in yesterday?"

"Right here." Mama showed me the big porch. I looked around bewildered. There was, to be sure, a porch shaped like an L, big enough to my city eyes, but where was the immensity of the night before? The porch ran up to the roof of the second floor, but that was no dim distant height. On one side was a staircase that ran up to the bedroom. Why, the day before that staircase had been gigantic and it had leaped toward the sky. And now

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it was just a stairs—I had come down it a minute before. About many new places I have this double picture—the first picture, and then the real picture. And the two refuse to click together in my memory.

There were so many strange new things that it was weeks before we could take them all in. In New York we never saw the country. The only way to reach the country there was with a horse and carriage. The trolley car ran only a little way uptown; the elevated stopped at about Ninetieth Street; there was no subway. The Bronx was farm and country. But we could not get to the Bronx. The only way people like ourselves got out of town was to take the boat to Coney Island, or the ferry to Staten Island. Even going to Staten Island would have meant a dollar for the family in car- and ferry-fare. And that was out of the question. So everything in Little Rock seemed new to us. All the time in Little Rock we saw or touched or heard or tasted something that we had met before only in our school books—or had never met at all. Out of the confusion of new impressions, the people of the house emerged slowly—Uncle Max, Aunt Dora, Aunt Esther, who was not a relative, and Charlie the baby.

Of Charlie there is little to be said. He was a dark-haired baby with fine blue eyes. Aunt Dora used to sit him on the dining room floor while we ate our noon dinner, and hand him chicken bones to play with. Mama's annoyance and disgust at this unfortunate table manner is all that has stayed with me about Charlie.

We had seen photographs of Aunt Dora, and we had heard Uncle Max talk about her, and we thought she would be beautiful. Maybe she was, but Mama thought

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not because Aunt Dora was slovenly, and nobody who was untidy could look beautiful to Mama. Pretty enough in a way, but certainly not beautiful, with her hair all hanging around like that. And she went about without a corset, which was, it seems to me, sensible in the stifling heat of Little Rock. But Mama never left off her own long heavily steel-boned corset, no matter how hot it was. In her photographs Aunt Dora is pretty and plump in a soft way. She came from Alabama and was a good-natured young woman who wanted to be comfortable and have nothing at all to do. She had the slatternly ways of badly brought up Southern children who have been dependent on Negro servants, but not on high-grade Negro servants. Perhaps she would have been less careless about herself and about her house if she had been happy. But she lived in constant fear of Uncle Max and his black moods. It seemed to be a poor sort of marriage. We got the idea that Aunt Dora did not care much about Uncle Max anyway, and that he thought a lot of her and was proud of her. We got the feeling that he was unhappy about it. But it was all a feeling that children get in a vague way without understanding or knowing why.

Pictures of my grandmother show a sad and weary face. Anybody would have looked like that, married to my cruel and pleasure-loving grandfather. Papa and Uncle Max had caught her tragic mood. Papa escaped from it into his Socialist dreams and his betting on the races. But Uncle Max's way of escape was less fortunate. His was brandy. The brandy seemed to make him even more glum and unhappy, but perhaps inside of himself he felt all right. All those people who look sadder with each glass

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of liquor must get something out of it. Of course I had no idea then that Uncle Max drank too much, or drank brandy or anything. That, like most other realities, was carefully covered up by the grown people about us. It was only after I was myself grown up that I heard of it. Perhaps because of Uncle Max's temper, perhaps because of his brandy drinking, perhaps because of the saloon, Aunt Dora led a lonely life and she was not fitted for it. She was naturally a sociable and gay soul.

But for some time all of them stayed in the background of my mind, strangers to be shy of. There was so much else to see. Oil lamps instead of gas. And the front yard with a fence of white palings and a gate all our own. And with roses in it. Four kinds of roses. Up to that time our conception of flowers had been the stiff little bouquet with lace paper underneath that brides carried in New York, or a pot of geraniums on the fire escape. The vine which ran over the front of the house here—big pink roses on that—and the moss rose, another huge bush; and the yellow Maréchal Ney roses—they smelled the sweetest of all. All these bushes seemed immense to me. All of them grew way over our heads, and we could have hidden in them. This was no business of carefully tended little bushes. The roses grew gaily, freely. But there was one queer one. I have never seen another like it. We called it the worm rose. Each rose on this bush was large and red, sweet smelling, and at the heart of each rose was a worm. It was not a worm that was destroying the bush—it always lived in that kind of rose, they said, and the rose did not mind it. It never went from that bush into any other.

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But the roses were not all. Up one side of the house, reaching way above the second floor to the roof, were masses of honeysuckle of dreamy perfume. And there was the holly bush, and trees and shrubs. There were two big magnolia trees with their dark shining leaves and their sickish smell. But the back yard was even more remarkable. It opened on an alley—we had never heard of an alley, much less seen one—it was a mysterious place, always deep in either dust or mud, hidden behind a tall board fence. That was the way the Negroes came in. There was the stable with the horse in the yard—Fannie was her name. We thought that queer because Mama's name was Fannie, too. But the barn with the carriage was our favorite play place. With the horse carefully removed, we drove the carriage. We hid in the hay and did all the things that country children usually do. But to us each of them was a sensational novelty. Through the gate on one side we could see the neighbor's cow. And there was an outdoor privy. Used as we were to running water, this little house set way out in the back yard had an exciting newness. And the chicken coops, with live chickens in them. Nobody had to urge us to feed those chickens. Once we had an enormous turkey that was kept apart by itself. We had to eat the turkey because it chased us all over the yard and frightened us.

Right in the middle of our back yard there was a watermelon growing. A real watermelon. In New York we had never had a whole melon, not even a half of one, but sometimes with our pennies we had bought one slice from the Italian fruitstand on the corner. Now here was a melon growing in the back yard, casually, as though

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melons always grew in back yards. Every day we would run out and measure it. It had grown there quite by itself, from a stray seed. And then just as it got to a real size and began to look like a real melon, its life was cut short. The cow from next door came in one day and ate it. Somebody had forgotten to fasten the gate.

And the well. Of course we had often heard of wells; we had read about them in books in school, but we had never seen such a thing. Ours stood in the ell made by the back porch—a well with a roof over it, and buckets, and a heavy cord that rumbled as it ran down and squeaked when you pulled it up. Sometimes Henry, the big Negro porter from Uncle Max's saloon, would bring up a watermelon. He would fasten it to the rope and put it down the well to cool. There was a trail of melons over all the time we were in Arkansas. Why, there was one so big Henry could hardly carry it. And he was six feet four inches tall, and had shoulders that went with his height. We saw him coming down the street carrying it. A white man came walking along going the opposite way. The sidewalk was narrow, so huge Henry stepped into the gutter to let the little white man go by. We were surprised as we watched him, because he seemed not to notice it. We could see that he was busy smiling at us, waiting to see how excited we'd be over the bigness of the watermelon. We liked Henry. Even Mama liked Henry. And there were cantaloupes. We had heard of muskmelons but not cantaloupes, and here they were, for only five cents apiece, even when you had to buy them. We had them every single day. We had plenty of melons and berries and corn and chickens, because mostly they came

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through swapping for liquor at the saloon. Farmers from round about brought in fruit and vegetables and poultry and took away liquor in exchange. They never had any money, but they had plenty of food.

There was simply no end to the new things—no gas, but oil lamps in every room, even a brand new bedroom suite for Mama's room. Papa had bought it before we got there. The most beautiful yellow oak. The dresser was the kind of thing that you could play around a lot because it had two big drawers across the bottom, and on either side of these rested two small chests like toy dressers, and in the middle stood a tall mirror that tipped back and forth. And the washstand did not have a horrid marble top, but a nice yellow oak one. Mama was delighted with the new furniture. It was the only thing in Little Rock that she liked, and she spent most of her time in the bedroom, which had honeysuckle over one window and a bay window looking out over the roses.

Jenny slept in a small bed in Mama's room. Benny and Dolly and I all had one room across the hall, in which there was only a row of cots along the wall. The whole second floor was ours. There was a third room on the floor but it stood empty. When we had saved money, Papa was going to buy a fine parlor set for it. It was still empty when we left the house for good. In my memory the whole house was only half furnished. There were no curtains in the windows. Uncle Max had started it with great plans; this house remained one of his unfinished dreams. He had many—till he realized that he never would finish any of them—that's when he killed himself.

Uncle Max and Aunt Dora had the lower floor, with

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their own parlor. But we all ate in the same dining room around a square table, big enough to seat all of us. This, too, was of new yellow oak. There we saw our first sideboard. But, most surprising of all, in the kitchen was a Negro maid to help in the cooking. Mama didn't think that was so nice.

In New York Dolly had been a little afraid of me because of my stupendous intellect, but she tells me that in Little Rock that feeling turned almost to awe because I read so much and wrote so many letters and seldom went out to the back yard to play with her and Benny. There was more in the house to read than I had ever had in my life.

On a table under the hall stairs stood a row of tall books, heavy and bound in dark leather. It was the first time that I had lived in a house with a set of books, and at once I fell into them. They were a complete set of the plays of Victor Hugo, with pictures. I had never read or even heard of Dickens or Scott or Shakespeare and I had never heard of Hugo. I read every word of those dull and pompous pages from the cover of the first volume to the cover of the last; and I cannot remember one word of any of them, nor any of the pictures. I could have read anything. There were also Aunt Dora's paper-backed novels, and whenever I got hold of one—and she was too easy-going to refuse me—I read them, too.

I had two favorite places for reading. One was on the top step of the long flight of stairs on the back porch. But there was a better one. Next to the stairs there stood one of the biggest bathtubs I have ever seen in my life. It was three or four times the size of an ordinary good-sized tub

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and was made of wood, lined with metal. It had a plug in it, but of course it had no running water and had to be filled with buckets from the well. It stood right out on the back porch, and so, what with discomfort, extra work and publicity, it was never used. We were bathed with the bowl and pitcher up in Mama's room, or in a wooden washtub. This handsome bathtub was always dry, and I liked to sit in it and read. The top was higher than my head when I sat down, and I felt nicely cut off from the rest of the world.

CHAPTER XVIII

ESTHER

THE person I remember best in Little Rock is Esther. Esther brought something quite new into my life. She was the first grown-up person I had ever seen who was cruel to me—not by chance or by carelessness, but because she wanted to be cruel. Aunt Esther we called her, although she was no aunt of ours. She was Aunt Dora's sister and, I suppose, about thirty-two years old. In a day of bangs, curls and frizzes, she slicked back her thin hair from her sallow forehead just as though she were already married and need not bother about getting a man. But she was not married so it showed that she had given up all hope. Come to think of it, maybe she was not more than twenty-six; that would have made her hopelessly an old maid. Aunt Dora had been only nineteen when she was married to Uncle Max.

Esther was kind always to Aunt Dora and to baby Charlie. She loved them and she was their abject slave. Maybe she could not bear the sight of us in their house. She couldn't bear it because we belonged to Uncle Max, and she hated Uncle Max, who had black moods, who was harsh and rough and who drank. She could do nothing to Uncle Max because she was afraid of him, but she could do things to us. The money that Uncle Max paid Papa belonged to her sister Dora. Perhaps she thought that Dora had stepped down in life by marrying a Pole. Aunt

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Dora and Aunt Esther and Aunt Becky, who was Uncle Sol's wife, were all proud because they had been born in Alabama and had a first-generation contempt for people who had been born in Europe.

And Mama started Esther off wrong. For the first day or two after we got to Little Rock, Mama ate nothing except a little dry bread. The great platters of fried chicken, fresh fish, biscuits and corn passed by her untouched. Uncle Max wanted to know why, and she said that Esther did not keep a kosher kitchen. Mama's ingrained religious notions were hardly like to be broken down by an uncorseted Esther, a dirty haphazard maid and flies in a steaming hot kitchen. Uncle Max said that from now on Mama would have charge of the kitchen. And naturally after that Esther did not like us a bit.

Even so we thought at first that Esther was jolly and lots of fun. She laughed a good deal and was cordial and sweet in her manner. We were used to simple people who meant what they said and acted the way they felt.

One morning she awoke us sharply from our trusting simplicity. I was swinging in the long swing (scup, we called it in New York) and Dolly and Benny were pushing me. Esther came along and helped to swing me, too. We thought that was nice of her, but after a few moments she began to push the scup so hard that each time it went clear to the top of the porch, which was two stories high, and each time my feet touched the ceiling. I had to hold my head down to keep from hitting it when the scup swung back the other way. I was scared and held on for dear life. It was all I could do to keep from falling out, and the floor looked hard. The other children began to scream at

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her; Mama came running out and made her stop. Esther said that she was just having a little joke and didn't realize that I was not used to swings; she didn't mean to frighten me—all the time making me look a little bit cowardly and ridiculous. I knew that she *had* meant to frighten me, but I had not learned to doubt grown people. So I was mixed up. It was a little too subtle for a child to explain. But Dolly and Benny thought as I did, and we all got a feeling as though she were always watching around corners like a cat, waiting to see if she could do something to us without being caught.

Mostly it was little things she did. Every week the *Sunday Post-Dispatch* came from St. Louis. I could hardly wait for it to come, and as soon as the grown people were through with it I read every bit that I could get hold of. One part was a cheap serial novel. Mama would not let me read that, but Aunt Esther was suddenly kind and gave me the paper secretly. She did it to spite Mama, but I could not quite understand that; and that too mixed me up about her.

But with the coming of the new song I wasn't mixed up any more. Nowadays a new song means little. There is a new one every week that everybody sings. But before the time of the radio and phonograph, there were few songs that caught on, and when they did they lasted us for years. In 1893 there was a sensational hit—everybody all over the country was singing and whistling and playing "After the Ball"; everybody was dancing to it.

One night we were serenaded. Four Negro singers with banjos and fiddles had come on to the lawn in the early dark and had sung to us. How sweet they sounded—and

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the honeysuckle smelling and the banjo singing with them, while they sang "Climbing up the Golden Stairs," "Listen to the Mocking Bird," and "After the Ball." These were all new to us, and we found them entrancing. I can hear the rich voices now. Henry, the porter, was one of the four, and Uncle Max gave them money, and they had ice cream and cake on the kitchen porch. So for the first time we heard "After the Ball." But we did not know the words. As well as we could we hummed around the tune for weeks. Aunt Dora, who was childish herself, talked it over with us and we made guesses at the words. She tried to play the tune by ear on the piano, but couldn't get it.

And then the *Post-Dispatch* announced that next Sunday it was going to print the words and music of "After the Ball." So Monday when the paper came, we would find out. Aunt Dora would play the tune on the piano and we would all sing. Monday came, but we never saw that part of the paper; it had vanished; and we knew at once that Aunt Esther had cut it out and hidden it. She said she had lost it. After that we knew that Esther meant to be mean, and we hated her. We told Mama. But she said she couldn't do anything now; things were bad enough in that house. She couldn't start trouble on account of a silly song. Esther would lie to her as well as to us. A grown person lie! Here was another piece of news. But Papa would get us another copy of the song somewhere. Papa did, and so after that we went around whenever we saw Aunt Esther, singing at the top of our voices:

"After the ball is over,
After the lights are gone,

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After the dawn is breaking,
After the ball."

But these were small things after all—you might call them teasing perhaps. Worse were to come. Esther knew how afraid I was of a broken doll; she had found that out quickly enough. And one day she caught me unawares. I was coming from the garden into the lower hall which was kept dark and cool. Against the light from the open back door I saw her square-built broad figure. She was holding something in her hand; I could not make out what. Once she had shown me a skinned squirrel and I had been shocked and disgusted. Now I thought maybe she had another one—and I stopped and waited, ready to run. Suddenly she stuck out her hand toward me. And with chill horror I saw what she held—a doll from whose body all the sawdust had leaked out. The china head was still there smiling smoothly, but the body hung limp. Slowly she waved the limp thing back and forth in front of my face. In all my life, before and since, I have never been so cold with fear. Nothing I have seen or heard has done to me what Esther did with that soft and crippled thing.

For a moment I stood frozen. Then I flew up the stairs into Mama's room, slammed shut the door and pushed to the latch. The room had a big bay of three windows with green shutters. In a wild hurry I pulled the big green shutters close and fastened them. I even pushed up the slats of the shutters so no crack would be open to the world. It was only nine o'clock in the morning, but I stayed shut up in that room all the long hot day. All day I had nothing to eat. I was hungry. Mama came to the door and told

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me it was all right, that she had fixed Aunt Esther, and that I should come out and have my dinner, that there was ice cream, some candy, too, and there was a new watermelon in the well, nice and cold, that she would keep me right with her all day. But I dared not come out. I stayed in the locked and shuttered room until Papa came home that evening, and then, with the double protection of Mama and Papa, I came down.

Of course there was a little impatience because everybody thought I had been silly, for after all it was only a broken doll. But Mama and Papa was furiously angry with Esther. Next morning Papa told Uncle Max. That is the time I saw Uncle Max's face get black with rage, that look I have told about before. He called her into his room, and she only stayed a minute, but when she came out she went away to her own room without a word. For a long time she kept as far from us as she could. She was terribly afraid of him.

I hated Aunt Esther. I remember hating only one other person when I was a child. That was a red-haired school teacher in the school at Sixty-eighth Street and Lexington Avenue. And I hated her for the same reason that I hated Esther. They both liked to make me feel small, silly and cowardly. That is why my hatred of Esther keeps on to this day, so many long years afterward, when I can hardly remember how she looked, and I don't know where she is.

One time she made me feel small was about the chicken. We ate chickens every day, for dinner at noon or fried for breakfast. Sometimes Henry came from the saloon and killed the chickens, but often Aunt Esther would do it instead. She would take a chicken and swing it around

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until its neck broke. Other children of our age, she grumbled, would have helped her by killing a chicken or two when she was so busy. Here I was, a big girl like me and I had never killed a chicken. I was afraid of them, that was it. I had run away from the turkey and now I was afraid of a little biddie chicken. Dolly had never killed a chicken. Neither had Benny. They never bothered about it one way or another. Dolly simply laughed at Esther's pestering. Dolly herself liked to tease, and you could not bother her that way. And of course Benny was too small. But I, with my always obsessing need to show that I was as good as anybody, was goaded into believing that I must kill a chicken.

So one day, a hot day with the sun shining down into the yard, I set out to prove what I could do. As I stood and looked at the little fluffy things running about, I began to feel squishy. But I dashed out at full speed, chased the chickens, caught a small one, held it by the neck, and grabbed the ax. I lifted the ax and held it in the air in the correct position. Just the way Henry did it. But to my amazement, I could not bring the ax down. My hand stayed in the air as though it were paralyzed. My left hand still held the chicken, but I couldn't move the right one with the ax. Esther stood and laughed at me. Dolly and Benny began by laughing, too, but after awhile they looked scared. They stood with their mouths open, eyes fixed on the unmoving ax. I clenched my teeth and I tried, but the right hand refused to move. Ridiculous and idiotic, it remained stiff in the air. Suddenly I gave up. I let the chicken go, dropped the ax, and ran into the house weeping with angry shame.

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I heard Esther's jolly laugh behind me as I ran in. And at the dinner table she told the others about it. Mama's face flushed with annoyance. She said: "Well, she's *my* child. I couldn't kill a chicken either if I never had anything to eat again as long as I live."

After the doll episode Mama would not talk to Esther at all. But that is hard to keep up in one house, and Mama hated quarrels. After awhile Esther told Mama she was terribly sorry. She had only meant to have some fun with me. She had no idea that any child could be so frightened by a doll. She was surprised that I had taken it so seriously. She wanted to make up for it, and if Mama thought it was all right, she would take us for a nice little outing in the woods and show us some new things we had never seen before—cactus and things like that. Mama looked doubtful, but we were so excited about going to the woods that at last she said, "Go then, only don't bother me." We got out our straw hats, although we seldom wore a hat in Little Rock. Dolly's and mine were natural color rough straw with a blue ribbon around them, and Benny's was a straw jockey cap. So all dressed up we set out with Esther for our first walk in the woods. We believed that Aunt Esther was going to be nice to us at last. I suppose that on the way and in the woods we did see many new things. I have forgotten all of them but one. I believe that Esther meant to be decent. I think it likely that she really meant it in all kindness and that she wanted to try to be friendly with Mama and so please Uncle Max; but, in the course of the walk, a temptation came along, and she couldn't resist it. The temptation came in the form of a glorious yellow flower. I see it still, large and yellow as

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beautiful butter.

"Oh, look! Benny, look. Dolly, look. Ooh, how grand!"

We stood and stared, longing to pick it, but we were used to Central Park in New York where you weren't allowed to pick flowers. And so we dared not. Esther stood and look at it, too, and laughed. She knew it was a cactus, but we did not.

"Isn't it sweet," she said. "And, my, aren't you lucky? You know that's a plant that never has a flower but once in a hundred years."

"Once in a hundred years?" we said. "Ooh!"

"Uh-huh. You call it a Century plant. Century—a hundred years."

It wasn't a Century plant, but how were we to know?

"Ooh," we said, "does it smell?"

"Uh-huh," she said in her soft Southern voice, with a rising inflection. Nobody down there said "yes" or "no." If they said "uh-huh" it meant yes. But if they said "huh-uh," it meant no.

"Can we pick it?"

This was too much for Aunt Esther. She could resist the temptation no longer. "Of co'se," she said. "Go right on ahead. Go on, pick it."

We were so hypnotized by the flower that we did not notice the thorns. And anyway while we were used to thorns on the stem of a rose we knew nothing about a plant like a cactus that had thorns on its leaves. We dashed up to the great yellow bloom against the dusty green rough leaves and all three of us grabbed the leaves to pull the flower toward us. And as fast as we could, all three of us let go. But too late, our hands were full of

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spines and thorns. We ran all the way home. Benny, who was the littlest, was squalling; Dolly and I tried not to let the devil see that we were crying. Mama was almost in anguish. She put salve on our hands and bandaged them. It was the last straw. But, thank God, we were going back to New York soon. She never spoke another word to Esther.

Maybe Esther resented Mama's four children as much as Mama's displacing her in the running of the house. I have heard that, a few years after we left Little Rock, Esther married. And they tell me that after she was married she became one of the kindest and sweetest of human beings.

CHAPTER XIX

HOWDY

THERE was so much high, wide space in Little Rock. You could look off a long way and nothing would get in front of you—nothing but light, bright, blue-green space. To-day when I go into a room, I want to walk straight to a window and look out. I want to push the walls away. I don't like to close doors or to put curtains over windows. I suppose that on First Avenue, I had always felt shut in by the buildings and the walls, but I was too little to understand it. They used to tell of punishments handed out to bad children, and it seemed to me that the most horrible was when a child was shut in a closet for misbehaving. In my memory is no picture of a New York sky, but there are many pictures of the sky in Little Rock—the sky with the sun in it, or pouring down more water than it ever did in New York, and the sky split with lightning, and the new moon coming over the top of a night-black, heavy perfumed magnolia tree.

Aunt Dora and Esther and even Uncle Max spoke with a soft drawl. We made believe to think it was funny when Aunt Dora called Charlie "honey," and we would call each other "honey" when she could not hear, making fun of her. But we really liked the sound of it. The one who surprised us most was our neighbor. Next door to us lived the Lieutenant Governor of the state. It was his cow that ate our watermelon. Every morning he would walk by

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our gate on the street and call in to Jenny, "Howdy!" in such a nice voice. And often he would bring her apricots from the trees in his yard. Just think of a stranger being so pleasant and friendly! A big man like that who was almost the governor of Arkansas. Uncle Max called him "Governor" when he spoke to him. "Howdy, Gov'nah" he would say. In New York strangers did not speak to you at all, or if they did they might be a kidnaper and you would have to run away. And even your friends said "Hey there" or maybe "Hello"—never anything soft and gentle like "Howdy."

But even though it spoke with soft Southern speech, Little Rock was still part of the Wild Southwest. I never saw an Indian there, but there must have been some Mexicans, otherwise why the hot tamales? And the men like Uncle Max covered their food with a blanket of Tabasco pepper till it looked red as a tomato. Fierce and dangerous it looked. We watched him open-mouthed as he shook the fiery red stuff over his chicken and corn. "You'd think he'd put it on his melon," said Mama.

Every man in the town carried a pistol. One day Uncle Max came home unexpectedly for noon dinner looking excited. He said that one of the biggest merchants of the town had been shot, right in his own house. Of that meal Mama did not eat a bite.

Little Rock had not settled down into neighborhoods yet. Most of the streets were unpaved—and they looked yellow and dusty. Right across the street from our house and the Lieutenant-Governor's there was a row of rough unpainted Negro cabins. Corn grew tall all around them—the first time we had ever seen corn growing—but

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they had no flowers or gardens. We would hear the Negroes fighting and singing and see their babies and small children running around naked.

But all the Negroes were not like that. There was Mattie the laundress. One of the places we liked to go to was Mattie's house. We felt at home there, and I think it was the only house in Little Rock where we did feel at home. It was small and clean. Small enough not to alarm children who were used to a flat—and clean as Mama's kitchen in New York. Mattie was a tall good-looking Negro woman, and we liked her as much as we liked the giant Henry. Once a week we went there on some errand about the laundry, and each time we came home bubbling with talk of her two cute neat rooms, and the crisp curtains at her windows, that were so white and stiffly starched, and how the bare floor shone. "She hasn't got no oilcloth, Mama. She has to scrub the floor."

"That's a lot of work." Mama shook her head in sympathy. She approved of Mattie. "Scrubbing a bare floor. The oilcloth was getting worn out in New York. It lasted six years. I guess that's all you can expect. They don't make things solid so they last all your life the way they do at home." "At home" this time meant Germany which she had left thirteen years before. All her family spoke like that of "home." Papa never did. When he said "home" he meant wherever we were at the moment.

During the whole of our six months in Little Rock I never saw the saloon at all, not even from the outside. I did not see it; Mama didn't see it; and Dolly didn't see it. Mama kept carefully away. What did she want with a saloon where farmers drank mostly whiskey, a place

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where rough men gambled and lost their money? Papa never said whether he did any gambling there or not. It was one of the many things that lay silent in their lives together, but she was pretty sure he did.

One day Papa took Benny along with him, and Benny saw the saloon. His description of it makes it seem as gigantic as things in a dream. A few years ago in Tia Juana I went with some friends into a place that had the biggest bar in the world. The bar was about the length of an ordinary city block, and when I saw it I said to myself, "Well, this is about as big as the saloon Benny saw in Little Rock." This of course was nonsense, but Uncle Max's saloon was pretty big.

Benny came home with his eyes popping out. He told us about the huge bar that ran along the left side of the door as you came in. At the right there were a few tables where men could sit down while they drank. Papa stood behind the bar with a white apron. Benny thought this was very funny—Papa in a white apron. Back of him were a lot of long shelves with glasses and bottles all the way along. Papa opened a drawer and showed Benny how full it was of watches and guns. The drinkers had left them when they didn't have any money to pay for their liquor.

On top of the bar were platters and bowls full of good things to eat. Benny tasted a lot of new things, even a hot tamale. Mama was cross about the hot tamale. Even when Papa said that they were special chicken tamales, made to order, Mama quirked her mouth and shrugged her shoulder with a resigned look. Rough men in big hats took Benny and sat him on the bar and gave him nickels. One

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man wanted to give him a drink of something out of his glass. Papa stopped that, but gave him a big cold glass of sarsaparilla instead.

Benny said he saw a lot of men go upstairs, and he begged to go till at last Papa took him up. There were two rooms up there—one for white men, and one for Negroes. He saw men playing craps in both rooms. In the white men's room the table for craps was huge and covered with green cloth like a billiard table. The Negroes' table was the same shape but was covered with cheap canvas. It was Henry who ran the colored game. He stood over the table, big and broad and black, with a club alongside of him on the table and a gun in each pocket. When he was not standing watch over the crap game, he ran errands or polished the bar or brought us watermelons. He must have been a pretty busy ducky! The green table game was run by a bushy white man. He, too, had a gun in each pocket, but he did not have a club. There were never any fights at either table because the players were afraid of the men who ran the games.

In front of the saloon that day Benny got an awful scare. He saw a lot of men in funny suits, Negroes, all chained together and sweeping the street. "It's a chain gang," somebody told him. He was a nervous child and once in a while for several years afterward he would talk in his sleep about Negroes and chains. Still Benny thought the White Horse Saloon was just fine; he wanted to go again and he was furious because Mama would not let him.

We would not have seen much of Little Rock outside the house if it hadn't been for Uncle Ike. Papa was too

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busy to take us around, and Mama never wanted to. Uncle Ike and Uncle Sol were Papa's two other brothers down there. They were not a bit like Papa or Uncle Max. Both were even-tempered, energetic young men. Uncle Sol fitted in best of all of them with the American way. He had set out to become a rich man. He cared about money. Uncle Max thought he did, but he gave away all he had as fast as he made it.

Uncle Sol was married to a talking, shrewd woman who was Aunt Dora's cousin. Aunt Becky was a first-generation American, and so she was high-toned toward Mama's broken English. She kept away from our house. She never came to it all the time we were there. Once she invited us to come and see her. We sat outside on the porch and had lemonade and cake. We never went there again. Uncle Sol was in the dry goods business then, and afterwards he owned a department store in Alabama. Before he died, he was a rich man, and his face was dry and tired. But he never had any of Papa's black moods.

Uncle Ike was our favorite person in Little Rock, a sweet-tempered boy of twenty, full of fun. He drove a lively horse in a surrey and, although he was busy courting a girl, he found time to come and take us driving in it, too. And he took us for walks to show us all the finest houses in the town and the best streets. Scott Street was the richest. We admired Scott Street a lot because it was paved with brick. New York streets were only paved with cobblestones. But we did not admire everything. One day when Uncle Ike was taking us for a walk he got quite discouraged. He had been pointing out to us this garden and that, and this house and the other, saying that Mr.

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So-and-So lived here, and what a rich house this was. I remember that the gardens seemed beautiful—neat and shiny with many broad dark green leaves and sharp-colored flowers. Some of them even had iron dogs. But we did not think much of the houses, because they were made of wood. “Why, they’re nothing but shanties.” In New York all the good houses were either brick or brownstone. The few wooden houses we had ever seen there were shabby and ramshackle, and were called shanties. And because these houses down here were made of wood they were shanties, too. Many of them were large, full of turrets and bay windows and trellises and fretted balconies that people built in the ’Nineties if they had the money. Mostly they were white or yellow. Uncle Ike did not take us to see the poor little plain houses, only the fine ones. But no matter how large or how fancy or how painted the house might be or how many iron dogs there were in its garden, to us it was a shanty because it was made of wood.

Sometimes Uncle Ike had odd ideas about entertaining us. Once he had us dressed in our best clothes and took us on a special outing. He said proudly that Little Rock had a new state penitentiary, the finest in the Southwest—and he was going to show us through it. He had got a special permit from the Governor, so we went. It was horrible. I can smell its dirty sewery smell to this day. The warden and all the guards were kind and jolly. They showed us the cells and let us look through the bars. We couldn’t see anything plain because it was all dark and shadowy. They showed us the kitchens, they offered us food—they were having beans that day for dinner, and they invited

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us to have some. They said, "These here are the finest beans you ever ate in yo' life." We were pretty good at eating, but not one of us could touch the beans. But Uncle Ike meant well, and we were grateful to him. He bought us boxes of candy, too, and gave us nickels and dimes and quarters.

When a few years later, still in his twenties, Uncle Ike died of cancer, it seemed dreadfully unfair.

I really did not like to go out in Little Rock. Our clothes were too shabby, or anyway I thought they were, and I felt a stranger. I felt as though I did not belong there. After a while it seemed to me that the place hated me—not that I hated it—I never did; but as though it didn't like me and didn't want me there. Part of it was because we didn't know any other children there at all. We had no one to play with. Benny was too little for Dolly and me, and, after we got used to the big back yard, and the barn and the porch, we missed the children in New York. I used to write long letters to them nearly every day.

But the worst of all was that we knew how Mama hated Little Rock. Even before she came she had made up her mind that she was going to hate it. Nobody here spoke German. Aside from our aunts and uncles there were few Jews. It was not her kind of place. Maybe Mama would have changed her mind and come to like it, but things happened so that, instead of going away, the hate got bigger and bigger. She did not like Uncle Max. Often when he was in his black moods, he would pass us by without speaking. When Papa was working at night, Uncle Max would go and sit on one end of the porch with

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Aunt Dora and their baby Charlie, while we sat at the other end. Mama's feelings were hurt beyond bearing.

One night we woke up because there was an awful noise in the house. Mama came to the door and said, "Go to sleep" but of course that was impossible. We heard Papa and Mama go hurrying downstairs, and then we heard loud talking in Uncle Max's room, right below ours. Next day Mama said: "Uncle Max was sick last night. He had inflammation of the bowels"—which was what people used to say when they had appendicitis. That afternoon Uncle Max went to Hot Springs to get well. Years later Mama told us that he had almost had delirium tremens. His brandy had given out, and it was the middle of the night, and he could not get any more. Aunt Dora, frightened, called on Papa for help, and Papa held his hand and quieted him until he went to sleep.

Uncle Max and Papa both left home so young that they still needed a mother or a father. When they were in trouble in their early teens there was no one to turn to, so throughout their lives the only thing they could do with trouble was to let it turn inward on themselves. They did not know how to turn to anyone else for help. I think for a little while in Little Rock Uncle Max leaned on Papa as though he were a father. But because each of them had to make a living, that relationship had to be broken up.

I was discontented because I could not go to school. It was so near the end of the term—the schools closed early down there—that it was not worth while starting, and I missed school.

And one day while Papa was out driving with Benny, the horse ran away and kicked the buggy to pieces. On top

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of all that—the heat. It never was cool, while we were there anyway. Mama had grown up in cold Eastern Prussia, and the heavy dull long-continued Southern heat made her nervous. If New York got hot, it never stayed hot for more than a few days at a time. But in Little Rock, once the heat started in May, it kept right on. That slow torpid heat shattered Mama. And it made Jenny and Dolly sick with summer complaint. The heat, and the unfriendly air of the house were too much for them. Benny and I, who were always healthy as children, had nothing the matter with us.

But all of us were scared by the crashing thunderstorms. We had never seen anything like them in New York. Why, right in our front yard the trees would be struck, and the house shook in the wind. And after one of the storms we would go along the street and see gigantic trees lying down helpless and miserable in the mud. It was there we saw our first hailstorms with stones so huge that Jenny thought they were a kind of egg. The house would shake; the house in New York never shook. But the storm did not last long, and afterward Mama would go out and say, "Well, it feels a little cooler, even if it isn't."

And after a while we saw that Papa, although he said little, also disliked Little Rock. "Disliked" is a weak word. He soon came to hate the place, the job, the house. It was not what he had expected. I think in his mind he had had some vision of a friendly little saloon like the German one on First Avenue in New York where a man came and drank his glass of beer and nobody got drunk. And perhaps he had a dream of a handy pool room where he could place bets. And a garden he could work in. But the

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Negroes worked the garden, and people got drunk in the saloon all the time. The White Horse Saloon, in those early days of Arkansas, was a rough, wild and ugly place.

Anybody less fitted than Papa to work in such a saloon, or in any saloon, I cannot imagine. There was nobody in Little Rock who cared anything about labor unions. And Socialism—why they did not even know the word. Papa had expected that in the saloon men would come and he would talk to them about the Democratic party and why it was not good for the working men. But there were not that kind of working men. They went to the primaries once a year and voted the Democratic ticket, and that was a special day for getting drunk. I can imagine the off-color stories and dirty talk that went on in the saloon, and how embarrassed Papa must have been by it. He was still burning with anger about the Homestead strike of the year before, and who in Little Rock cared that a lot of dirty foreigners had been shot down and killed? So Papa had no one to talk to, and Papa loved conversation.

Bad as these things were, they might have been borne. It was a small thing that broke Mama's back, a small thing that made it so she could not stay in Little Rock at all. Every other night Papa came home from work at midnight, bringing the day's receipts with him and carrying a revolver in his pocket. Mama nearly went crazy over that gun. Papa was a small, thin man and had never carried a gun before. I do not remember ever hearing him mention the word courage, but his deep-set gray eyes looked fierce under his bushy eyebrows. He accepted the gun, the long hours, the lonely walk home under the shadowing trees through dark, wide empty streets in the matter-of-fact

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way that is so common among people who have to make a living. But each time Mama saw him take the pistol from his pocket and lay it in the top dresser drawer, she shuddered and got indigestion. And at last she could not stand it any more.

As these things mounted, added to each other and multiplied—the climate, the saloon, Esther, Aunt Becky, no kosher meat, no one to talk to, no Germans, children sick—each of these gray things piling one on the other—they were too much for Mama even though she believed, like those Christians whom she feared, that suffering was a noble part of living. And too much for Papa even though he had little appetite for going back to a factory bench in New York. And so, after six months, they were ready to give up and go. But Papa could not leave at once—Uncle Max needed him. “All right,” said Mama, “I’ll go right away and you come later.”

Uncle Max took it calmly. He said when he heard it that he was going to sell the saloon anyway. It wasn’t doing well enough. After all Uncle Max wasn’t the man to run a saloon. The things that kept Papa from doing well as a barkeeper were just as bad for Uncle Max, but he had one thing that was worse—he liked to consume his own goods, and everybody knows that won’t do for a saloon keeper.

So everything was settled. We would leave at once and as soon as the saloon was sold Papa would follow us.

CHAPTER XX

DAY COACH PILGRIMAGE

THE trip back to New York from Little Rock should have been a simple one, but poverty and Mama's ignorance of English turned it into a pilgrimage full of peril. Our disasters were so queer that we got into a fog of feelings and got all mixed up in one another's troubles. To this day I am not sure where it was Benny who caught his hand in the heavy train door or whether it was I. Was it I who had the toothache, or was it Dolly?

For a week of sunny October days Mama had been packing and baking. There had to be enough food for the whole trip. It cost too much to buy on the way. First a big box of butter cookies; thin and crisp and delicious when we started out, but flaccid and tiresome before we arrived. That was many years ago, but I have never been able to eat one since. The same hard-boiled eggs cooked with caraway seeds that we had had on the way down, the same conserve made of orange peel and almonds, but more fruit, and a fried chicken—everything that we would need, except, of course, coffee and milk.

We started all right. Mama was cheerful—no, more, she was happy. To be sure, she knew she was going to have a hard time taking care of four restless children in a day coach for three days and two nights, but she had managed it all right coming down. Then she was going to an unknown and wild outpost of her life. Now she was

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going home. She'd be busy enough dressing the baby, and combing our long braids and tying them with ribbons, and keeping us out of trouble—but that was nothing; she was always busy wherever she was. After all, she couldn't do any sewing on the train and she could use that time to keep us in order. Soon she would be back in New York, with its nice safe street cars and its running water, where she could do her own work, and everybody spoke German. Too bad the old furniture had been sold, the cherry-wood parlor set with its red plush, and the walnut beds. But we'd buy new furniture on the installment plan. A fine yellow oak dining room set. That was one thing she had learned down here in Little Rock. Americans didn't eat off the kitchen table; they had yellow oak dining rooms.

Dolly and I were dressed alike. We were always dressed alike, although the fashions were more becoming to her than to me. Now we were wearing jumper dresses of blue and white seersucker. Benny, like all other little boys, wore a dark blue suit with a stiff Eton collar and a bow tie. And Jenny, with a sort of crown of light silky curls all around her head, looked very pretty in a little plaid dress with puffed sleeves and a yoke trimmed with red featherstitching.

Henry took the big valise down to the depot. We thought it was a huge valise but it looked small when big Henry was carrying it. I don't know how we got to the station. Fannie, the mare, had been sold after she kicked the carriage to pieces—and Uncle Max had not bought another horse. The carriage stood dustily in the barn.

"Can I take a bokay of roses along?" one of us asked.

"Foolishness," said Mama. "They'd be dead before

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tomorrow morning. Why can't you carry this box of cookies? Jenny, don't go in the garden—you'll get your dress dirty. No, Benny. A hot tamale to take along! Is that all you want? Papa won't buy you a hot tamale to take along."

At the depot Papa went ahead, carrying Jenny and walking so fast we had to run to keep up with him. He put us all in our seats and kissed us and said good-bye and hurried away. We knew that there were tears in his eyes and he did not want us to see them.

Jenny began to cry. She wanted to get out and run to the corner to meet Papa. She had done that every night; why not tonight? The train was drawing out of the station and Papa was standing at the end of the platform. And when Jenny saw him there, looking as though he were going away while we were standing still, her quiet cry turned into a loud and bitter wail. Mama could not stop her. But a passenger came up and gave her a piece of candy and at once she forgot and was smiling.

It was not so bad the first night. The cars were tourist sleepers, the same we had coming down, with big red velvet armchairs whose backs could be dropped a little. The children could sleep nicely in them; Mama dozed off sometimes herself. In the morning we got off at St. Louis, but we made a mistake there which turned the rest of that journey into the kind of traveling you do in nightmares—where you always land in the wrong place, where you never can catch your train, and where you edge up heavily to your destination but know that you will never arrive. The trip that should have taken two and a half days ran on to five days and five nights.

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For some dark reason we had to wait all night in a tiny dirty depot at Bluffton, Indiana, with a big iron stove in the middle. The baby, asleep on the bench, fell off to the floor while Mama nodded for a moment. At Toledo, also mysteriously, we had to get out of one train and wait all night for another. I don't know all the different roads we traveled on, the Lackawanna and the Lehigh Valley were only two of them.

The food in the boxes began to run low, and we were hungry. At some little station, goodness knows where it was—the rain was pouring down in sullen sheets—Mama got off to buy us something to eat. A moment later the engine gave its choo-choo and the train started on. At once the baby and Benny set up a shriek. Other passengers tried to comfort us, to tell us that the engine was only going on to pick up water and would back up again to the station. But Jenny wouldn't hear of it, so a good-natured man got off in the pouring rain and walked down the tracks and brought Mama down to us under an umbrella. I can see it now—the solid gray rain, the big black umbrella, the man holding it over Mama with one hand and a package with the other—and Mama picking her way down the sloppy track, holding up her black full skirts in each hand. And then, while she opened the packages she had bought, the train backed up again to the point where she'd got off.

"See what a trouble you were, and all for nothing," she said. But there was no heart in her scolding. She was deeply moved by our need of her.

We were always rebellious toward Mama, fighting off what she wanted us to do. Between her and me, there

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was a sharp clash when we were at home. But on this dreadful trip all that disappeared. We were all of us the way we were as little children, the way Jenny was now.

She opened the packages she had bought, but she had been in too much of a hurry. The sandwiches were made with ham. Carefully she took out the ham and threw it away before we could eat the bread and butter.

And somewhere else along the road—maybe it was in Indiana—there was the terrible villain of the trip, the mean conductor who came to her one night as it was growing dark and said: "Your tickets is expired, they're no good any more. You'll have to buy new tickets."

"How much?" she asked.

"Fifty dollars."

"I haven't got fifty dollars."

"Well, you'll have to get off then. You can telegraph from here and get it," he said. It was the worst moment of the trip.

An overwhelming disaster. She was dazed and we were frightened. Fifty dollars—it was crazy even to think of it. She sat puzzled and we all stared at her, silent, when a man came up from two seats behind and said: "Let me see those tickets, ma'am. I'm an inspector." He looked at them and wrote something across the back of each one. "It's all right now, you can go on." He called the conductor. "I fixed up these tickets. This lady can go through on them." There were a devil and an angel on that trip. That conductor was the devil, and the inspector was the angel.

There were other bright spots. Breakfast in Toledo. That was lovely. The depot was so nice and clean and

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new, and we had fresh boiled eggs and hot coffee and crisp rolls at the counter. There is a shining sun mixed up in the memory of Toledo for me. And of course we were bursting with eagerness to get to New York. We had six months' news to tell the boys and girls there, and such news!

"I'll say 'howdy' to them when I see them," said Dolly.

"They won't know what you mean."

"All right then, so much the better. Look—we'll tell them about all the three kinds of roses we had in the garden."

"Four kinds," said I.

"Never mind, I'll tell them about the chickens," said Benny, "and the chicken tamale."

"You weren't allowed to eat any chicken tamale."

"Well, you don't have to tell them that, tattle-tale."

"I'll tell about the watermelon that the cow ate."

We spent a lot of time counting our pennies and thinking what to do with them when we got home. The smallest piece of money anyone would take in Little Rock was a nickel. And nobody would take five pennies and count it as a nickel either. Pennies were no good. You couldn't buy anything with them. Before we left New York, aunts and uncles had given us pennies to spend. We still had them, because they were no use in Little Rock. And Mama and Papa had given us all they had. So now, on the way home, each of us had a store of pennies. Benny kept his in his little trousers pocket, but we had no pocket, so Mama took care of ours. Many an hour we passed on that train on the way back, saying how we would spend them. One thing we were all going to do. We would each of us buy a

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fine black lacquer pencil box.

"I want a rope to jump with," said Dolly.

"I want a whole box of chalk," said I.

"I want a knife," said Benny.

"Apple-on-a-stick," said all of us.

On the whole we did not fight as much as usual. Still there were fights. I've heard many profound thinkers wonder why the women of my generation fought so hard for suffrage. The reason is simple. When we were little we had long braids and the boys had short hair. They could pull our braids, and did. We couldn't pull their hair at all. Naturally that filled all growing girls with deep bitterness and rebellion against the unfair advantages of the male.

But, long hair or short hair, we were going all day long in constant procession to the water cooler or to the toilet compartment at the end of the car. When one of us caught a finger in the heavy door, all four children wept together, while the rest of the passengers came with salves and bandages. Except for that one conductor, everybody was nice, whether passenger or train crew. Everybody took a great deal of trouble to try to help us. One brakeman went into the diner and warmed milk for the baby. She said "howdy" over and over again to all the people on the train. One passenger told us stories. They were all poor people in the day coaches, and they liked us and we liked them.

Luckily we did not know that Papa was going about Little Rock in a state of frenzy, waiting for a telegram from New York telling that we had got there safe. Mama did not think of wiring him. After the second day he kept

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sending a stream of wires to Uncle Samuel in New York. And for two days Uncle Samuel and Uncle Albert and Uncle Moritz waited at the different New York depots, to see if we would turn up. There were five railroad stations then, and four of them were across the ferry in New Jersey. They went to the Lackawanna, to the Pennsylvania, to the Erie, to the New York Central. No one went to the Lehigh Valley, they never even thought of it, and that is the one we finally arrived at—after our fantastic wanderings.

And all of it happened because Dolly and Benny and I were so filled with cocky self-assurance at St. Louis. When we got there from Little Rock we were supposed to wait in the station until evening and then transfer to the train for New York. We had a grand time all day—the four of us. The baby was two years old, Benny was seven, Dolly ten, and I eleven. That depot kept us pretty busy. “Dee-po” we called it. It was a gray, dusty barn of a place and it seemed enormous, filled with a high twilight. The roof seemed to be far, far up in the air. We had curious toys to play with. Each engine that came into the station was a new toy. Their enticing bells and their bold headlights and the lovely black smoke they sent curling up behind them! And the whistles! Between trains, we strutted proudly, with the sense of being greatly traveled. Some way we had got the notion into our heads that we were to go to New York by a train called the “Big Four.” Heaven knows where this idea came from. In Little Rock we had heard much familiar talk about trains by name. Nobody said, “I’m going on the 6:05,” but “I’m going on the ‘Big Four,’ or ‘The Katy.’ ” Neither was the name of

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a train, they were the names of railroads. The "Big Four" is the line to the Southwest—to New Mexico and Arizona, I think.

Anyway, we got this idea that we were to go to New York on the "Big Four." And it never occurred to us for one moment to doubt our own wisdom and knowledge. It did not occur to us to look at a time table or to show our tickets. We knew it all. Mama, poor thing, feeling lost in the wilds of the English language, took our word for it. So every hour or two Benny or Dolly or I ran up to anybody in the depot who wore a uniform and demanded, "What time does the 'Big Four' leave?" And each time we ran back and yelled, "It leaves at seven o'clock, Mama."

"Don't shout so. You disgrace me. If your Papa was here you wouldn't yell like that."

Just before seven o'clock a guard came over and said, "The 'Big Four' is in, ma'am. You can get aboard now."

A porter picked up the biggest suitcase; it was too heavy for any of us to carry. We carried the boxes and Mama picked up the baby and so we hurried down the platform and across the tracks. Two of us were already on the steps of the train, jumping up and down impatiently waiting for Mama to come aboard. Leisurely the conductor opened out the long strings of tickets—one for Mama, one for Dolly and me, half of one for Benny, and none for the baby.

Then words of doom fell from his lips. "This is the wrong train, ma'am."

"What? Isn't it the 'Big Four'?" we demanded in a chorus.

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"It sure is. It's the 'Big Four' and it goes the other way from where you're going. That ticket you got here is for the 'Clover Leaf.' That's the train that goes to New York."

That sounded like a nice train too—"Clover Leaf." Not so bad. But at once he went on. "The 'Clover Leaf' left two hours ago, ma'am."

With open mouths we looked at him while Mama gathered together her few words of English, and asked when the next train would go to New York. "I think you'd better talk to the station master, ma'am." He was kind, but he had his own work to do.

Our cocksure pride was wilted and meekly we trailed along behind Mama, not dancing in front of her as we had done all day.

"Ask him," she told me when we found the station master. And she listened closely, for her faith in our knowledge was shattered. The next train would be at seven o'clock tomorrow morning. "But that'll cost you twenty-five dollars extra." She thought of the forty dollars in her little black pocketbook. No—that was impossible. She'd have only fifteen dollars left, and who knew what might happen now?

She shook her head, and the station master took one of the baby's curls and played with it, while he thought over the problem. "Well, there is a train tomorrow evening just like that train you missed tonight—that 'Clover Leaf'—that's the only one."

"We have to wait a whole night and day?" she asked slowly, in painful English.

He nodded. Weakly she sat down on a bench.

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"Keep quiet," she ordered us, at this moment quite unnecessarily. "Let me think about it."

"There's a hotel near here," said the station master. "I think you'd better take the children and have a good sleep there."

It was dark outside now, and the depot began to look mysterious, with its few dim lights, misty with the stale smoke trains had left behind them. Once in a while engine bells would ring, all starting off to big new places. But we did not run out to look at them.

The broad, solid station master had a comfortable face. Mama liked him and she trusted him. But a hotel? She'd never stayed at a hotel in her life. She might be robbed, and the children might be kidnaped. And she wasn't sure how you acted at a hotel. She might do the wrong thing and look like a fool. She turned to us and spoke in German: "No, I could not go there. A Gentile place—they don't know how to be clean. Anyway, it would cost money. Maybe five dollars. What is one night? We will wait here."

There were not so many people in the depot now. And we were bored and restless. Mama spread her coat on a bench and laid the baby on it. She was a good baby and was asleep in a minute. A man came in and ordered ham and eggs at the lunch counter. We watched him eat. And after a while another man came in and ordered cocoa. And then after a while no one came in at all. The tracks outside were silent and even the occasional engine champing along seemed far off to sleepy ears and veiled eyes. By ten o'clock all four children were spread out on benches and fast asleep. The station master brought an extra coat

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to cover the baby. We others slept soundly with our coats for pillows. The weather was not cold.

Mama sat straight and alert watching the four of us. Many a time she told the story in later years. The hours crawled around the clock for her. Ten o'clock; half past ten; eleven o'clock; quarter past; half past; quarter-to-midnight; five after; ten after. So many minutes—like watching the water dribble out of a clogged sink. Everything was gray—the lights, the men at the food counter, the greasy doughnuts under the glass cover. The air was sick with smoke.

She was frightened. The man behind the food counter was dozing. No one else. She was really all alone in the big depot. There had been nothing as drab and full of fear as this even when she had come over alone from Germany fifteen years ago. Benny spoke in his sleep—he did that sometimes when he was nervous and wrought-up. Sometimes he even jumped up wild-eyed from some dream—she had better sit nearer him. The girls always slept quietly, their cheeks red against their shining brown braids.

A policeman came in, waved his hand in a friendly way and sat down at the counter. "Gimme some coffee, Joe. Got a tamale left?" He seemed tired. She was used to tired workmen, but the station master seemed to her a god-like creature, full of authority, and she felt less frightened of other things.

After a while in a trance of automatic watching of the four crumpled bodies, she forgot the policeman and the station master. She pinched her arms to keep awake. She

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glanced at the clock. One! She looked at the dusty floor to make sure nothing had dropped from her bundles. A little gray strip of darkness was moving along the floor. The gray strip stood still again. A few seconds and it moved again. Now she was sure—a rat! She remembered the sleeping children and clapped her hand over her mouth to stop a scream.

The policeman looked, saw her hypnotized eyes, followed their line. Instantly a shattering crash beat upon her ears and she started back, hands in the air—the gray strip had rolled over. In a new fear she turned her head slowly until she looked over her shoulder and saw a smoking pistol in the officer's hand. He stood under a lamp and the black shining thing glittered darkly.

She had run away from Little Rock, from the gun in the drawer, and here was another one—only this one was active and vicious, fired close to her head. The pistol was terrible—but the rats were worse.

It's fine when you're terrified like that to have somebody you've got to protect. Swiftly she turned to make sure that the children were safe. None of us had even stirred in sleep.

"Now don't be afraid, ma'am," the policeman stood with the gun aimed. "Nothin's going to hurt you. I'll get the little devils."

All night long, he and another policeman came in at intervals and shot rats.

When we had gone to sleep that night her hair fell in great black soft waves against her white skin. The next morning when we sat up on the benches, Dolly said,

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"Mama—what's that white dust in your hair?"

"Dust?" she asked, and started to brush it off with her hand.

"You didn't get it off," called Benny.

"Come on and I'll wash your faces and then I'll look in the mirror," she said, and led us all into the place with the sign "Ladies." And looking into the mirror she put her hand to her head and with a tired gesture felt the first gray in her hair. She was thirty-six years old.

CHAPTER XXI

THE END OF THOSE YEARS

WE tried to go back to the same old New York. We thought we had gone back. Half a mile from the old flat we got a new place to live on Seventy-ninth Street near Avenue A. The new flat had one less bedroom, but it had a bathroom. And we had a whole dining room set—yellow oak—with a sideboard. We had no parlor at all. Although we never ate in it, and it was used as a sitting room, we were proud of the dining room. Benny slept in it on a couch. All the other children had merely parlors. No one we knew in New York owned a sideboard.

The children in the old house on First Avenue were still there, living in exactly the same way. Only six months had gone by—but we had lived through a revolution in our lives. The other children were the same as they had been, but we were different. As soon as we got back Dolly and I went to see Millie and Georgie. As we walked down First Avenue some boys on a street corner sang after us as we passed:

Two little girls in blue, lads
Two little girls in blue.
They were sisters,
We were brothers. . . .

After that Dolly and I said we wouldn't be dressed alike any more. We rebelled, both of us. So that ended. And

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Dolly refused to be called Dolly any more. She said it was silly. Her name was Dora. Benny became Ben. I stopped being Lünchen, and became heavy Helena or plain Lena. We fought the battle side by side, and we won.

I was a big girl now—nearly twelve years old. I must get over that fear of a broken doll. Out of the remnants of First Avenue the two figurines from the mantelpiece turned up. And I still had to dust them. One day looking at them, I said to myself, "Me running away like a baby from a broken doll. People think I'm a fool when I run away. I got to stop it. I got to get over it." Always when I had dusted the little girl figure I had held the head carefully onto the body with one hand while I used the rag with the other. This time, bracing myself, I deliberately took the head of the girl doll right off. I stood looking at the two pieces. I turned each one over in my hand, I looked inside the awful hollow of the head, I dusted each separately, and then I put the head back. I hated doing it, but it was a help. I still did not like broken dolls, but I no longer ran away from them in a spasm of hysterical fright. A few years ago someone gave me a pitcher, yellow and pretty. It is in the shape of a cat, and the head of the cat is the lid, and comes off. I never use that pitcher—it stands on a high shelf in a closet—but I am ashamed to give it away.

After we had been back in New York a few weeks, Papa came, too, and brought Uncle Max with him. Uncle Max had sold the saloon and lost a lot of money on it, but he still had some left. Now the idea was that he and Papa would go into business together in New York. Uncle Max had shaved off his moustache and he was almost good-

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looking and almost cheerful. As a business man he was not much better than Papa. But even if he knew it there was nothing he could do about it. Uncle Max, Uncle Sol and Uncle Ike had all come straight from Poland without education or trade. In Poland they had no chance to learn a trade. And my grandfather had no idea of spending money to teach them a profession. But they had heard about how well Jews did as business men in America, and so they came here light-hearted, without any doubts about success.

There were eight brothers in that family. The oldest was that Uncle Moses who spent a long and satisfied life studying the Talmud. With the idea of moving his family to America he once came to New York to look over the ground. He did not write that he was coming, but one day knocked at the door when Mama was scrubbing the floor. She and Papa had been married only a few months; they had bought what they needed for their three rooms on the installment plan. Oilcloth was one of the things they could do without, and the bare white boards needed a lot of scrubbing. In her big gingham apron, with her sleeves rolled up, and the scrubbing brush in her left hand, she opened the door. He walked carefully around the pail of water in the middle of the floor with a look of shock on his face. He stayed in New York one week, and disgusted, went back to Poland, to lose himself once more in studying the Talmud. But Papa got an indignant letter from his mother. She said: "Your brother Moses says that you allow your wife to scrub floors. What kind of thing is this for a son of mine to do?" She knew Papa was poor, but as far as I can make out, even poor Jews in Poland found

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some poorer servant girl to scrub floors. Mama thought this was a great joke.

The other seven brothers all started out with the idea that they were going to be big rich business men. Three managed to get rich if not big—Uncle Sol in Alabama, Uncle Henry who stayed home in Warsaw and made more money than any of them, and Uncle Bernhard in Berlin who had the best time of them all because he became well-to-do, not through his own shrewdness but his wife's, and he had a good full life while he did it. His business was the buying and selling of Turkish tobacco. Six months of every year, for forty years, he rode a horse around the tobacco plantations in Turkey—there were nothing but dirt trails—and bought the tobacco growing. From his office in Berlin he resold it to makers of cigarettes all over the world. When I knew him, he was a gentle, solid looking man, with a generous snub-nosed face and a stiffly turned-up German moustache, in formal striped trousers and a double-breasted black coat. He told me that in all his dealings with the Turks, he had never had a scrap of written agreement. All business was done in French and by word of mouth. He bought the standing crops, and if they were killed later by a blight, it made no difference to the contract—the planter made his delivery at the price agreed on, no matter how much he lost. They would go into bankruptcy rather than break their word. He said they were hospitable and charming; and when, after the War, he was too old to ride around on a horse for six months at a time, they did business by letter. Though he lived in Germany for sixty years, he was never allowed to become a German citizen.

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To his apartment in Berlin came Mohammedans who brought their own servants to cook for them in the kitchen. That was funny because my Aunt Regina kept a Jewish kitchen; she would not touch the Mohammedan food and they would not touch hers. The Christians who came ate either without noticing. As Papa often told Mama, when it came to food it was simpler to be a Christian.

Without his wife Uncle Bernhard would never have made much money; he was better at giving away than he was at accumulating. He had one son who died in 1914. Twenty years later the boy's room stood exactly as it had, ready for him to walk into it any minute, gay and sunny with fresh flowers every day. Uncle Bernhard wanted to move to the country, but Aunt Regina would not leave the apartment where her son had died.

The youngest of all the brothers was the only one except Papa who had a trade. He was a tailor, with a large family of children, a pitiable failure in Chicago, supported most of his life by his brothers.

One thing of itself showed that Uncle Max was no business man—he wanted to take Papa in as a partner. When they arrived in New York they were full of a new scheme. They were going to start in a small way by selling boys' knee pants, and from that build up a large wholesale clothing business. Neither one of them knew anything about boys' clothing, pants or otherwise. But a good many Russian and Polish immigrants had started by making cheap clothes in sweatshops. Papa and Uncle Max never thought for a moment of making clothes in a sweatshop and profiting by somebody else's labor. So clear and logical a business idea did not occur to them. What they were

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going to do was to sell the pants after someone else had made the labor profit. But almost at once the plan began to lose its polish, and to look rusty and stale. They simply could not sell the pants at a decent price. A few they got rid of at a loss. They had paid too much for them. Most of the remainder poor Benny had to wear out. All the other boys were wearing corduroy pants and Benny wanted corduroy pants, too. But he had to wear out the left-over stock, and they were the most awful colors. He got in angry tempers about it, but they did him no good.

Uncle Max and Papa blazed up with another new idea—a worse one even than the pants. Why not open a saloon here in New York? If they were not fitted to run a saloon in Little Rock, they were even less so in politics-ridden, hard-boiled New York. But they rushed right ahead and of course they had no trouble buying a saloon, a big one on Second Avenue. But with even more breathless speed it died on them. Uncle Max gave up then—New York was no place for him. He said good-bye and went to Memphis, and we never saw him again. It was five years later, that he shot himself when all his dreams turned to nightmares.

But Papa had had a taste of trying to sell goods, and he made up his mind that this was the life for him. And he was right. He was really a good salesman. He made friends easily and quickly; he flared with enthusiasm, and he was not practical. These are all good qualities for a salesman. It is a nuisance to a salesman if he is so practical that he cannot get enthusiastic about all kinds of new schemes.

So Papa looked about for something new to sell—and

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he soon found the perfect thing. Somebody's cousin had come over from Europe with a new kind of postcard, all the rage in Austria. Papa brought some home to show us. They were really pretty. Each card had a different bird on it made out of bits of real feathers. Could Papa sell these? Sure, he could! Wonderful! Papa did not stop to ask how many the cousin could make, how quickly he could deliver them or what capital he had. With nothing but a few samples and a few prices he set out eagerly to sell the feathered cards. He did not go to any modest little distributor, but to the biggest wholesaler in the business, and he came away triumphant with a huge order in his pocket. When he got home that night his hat was more on one side of his head than usual. That was one of the things that annoyed Mama; she thought a man ought to wear his hat straight. What an evening that was! To celebrate, we had fifteen cents' worth of strawberry ice cream. All our troubles about money were going to be solved. Papa would be a salesman and live like a gentleman, instead of a factory hand with old clothes and a soiled collar.

But of course none of it worked out, and for an odd reason—the order Papa had got was too large. The cousin who made the postcards could not turn them out fast enough. And neither he nor Papa could organize a factory. The orders couldn't be filled; the customer was angry; Papa was furious—and that was the end of that.

So there we were again, desperate about money, and again Papa was sunk in a black mood. I began to see that Papa was not all-powerful. I began to know that Papa and Mama were often wrong. Little Rock began it—the books

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I was reading pounded it in. I lost my sense of safety. And from that time on, I remember storm and rain. I remember being ill and having pain. Then I began to learn some things that were not so, that helped shake me. Little things like this. We had always eaten in the European manner, with a knife and fork, putting the food into the mouth with the left hand. Now I learned that the polite American way was to act as though one hand was tied behind the back. Cut a piece of meat, put down the knife, pick up the fork with the right hand and so on. Such nonsense can make dents in the faith of a child, especially if Papa and Mama are foreigners.

Until then I had been a part of my surroundings, a part of my family, Mama's child, Papa's daughter. Now I began to feel vividly at odds with everything about me. It was at this time that I had my turn of thinking I could not really belong to Mama and Papa, that I had been an orphan child left on a doorstep and adopted. It was then I felt abused and misunderstood. I had been rebellious toward Mama for a long time, but about this time I began to be almost at war with her. I fought against everything that she wanted or that she told me to do, and it was only when I was more than twenty that I began to understand her and to be ashamed of myself. I was not ashamed of the war, but of my ungracious way of conducting it.

It was about this time that I began really to read. On my thirteenth birthday, the first day that I was eligible, I joined the Free Public Library and ran away from reality to lose myself in an ocean of books. Dickens, Thackeray, and Louisa Alcott—they were my world.

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Louisa Alcott marked and moulded me. I modeled my manners and my ideas on her as closely as I could. The sweet and gentle benignity of her books did me a good deal of harm. They gave me preposterous ideas about kindness, and worse ones about the value of gentility.

I read anything I could borrow. I never thought of buying a book. At three o'clock I would rush home from school, grab my current book, sit down by the window and read motionless until, if I looked up and then looked back at the page, I could not see a word. It would be almost dark. As long as I had not lifted my eyes, I could keep on reading, but as soon as I did so for a moment I could no longer see when I looked at the page again. To stop me, Mama scolded, ordered, threatened. If I heard I shrugged angrily and read on. Sometimes I didn't even hear. And when I went to bed at night I lay and thought of the people in the books and made up new stories for them and cut and refashioned the plots to suit myself better. I always had a book under my pillow, and when the first light came in at the window I would wake up and begin to read at once, and then only get up in time to hurry to school. My reading was not just a pastime or a pleasure. It was the world in which I lived, and everything else around me turned into shadow. It is because of this that I can draw so little from memory of these two years between the time we got back to New York and the time we moved to Boston. The outer life—even the school life—was only an irritating interruption to what I was reading in books.

Nicholas Nickleby was the first. Then came Thackeray and Scott. All kinds of boys' books. Except for Louisa Alcott I had no patience with such girls' books as were

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then popular—the Elsie Dinsmore books, and that sort of thing.

My hair still was braided into two long braids, and I still wore a bang. That I know from old photographs. I don't know it from my memory because I paid no attention to how I looked.

About this time, Dolly and I got new seersucker dresses of blue and white with tiny black velvet ribbons. The first day she wore hers Dolly went with some other girls to Central Park and fell into the lake. And I had a fight with a girl on the street—a fist fight. I was easily made miserable, but the shame of this threw me into the depths. It was summer but I would not go out of the house for three days. And there was a boy on the block who was supposed to be my friend. There was no beau notion about it. No little girl on the block had a beau, and no little boy had a sweetheart. Only, when boys and girls played together, that little boy and I were partners. Perhaps that was because he had five or six books which he lent me. They were the Alger books, and I thought they were wonderful.

But in spite of my absence in books, I could hardly help seeing a little of what Mama and Papa were going through. Though they never bought any kind of food without figuring on whether they could afford it, they were never so poor that they were hungry. But nearly every night Mama was so tired she couldn't eat, even though she had the strong body of a country upbringing. Papa never said he was tired, but fatigue made him nervous and easily angered. The weariness of working people is no pleasant, relaxed tiredness. It is like an illness; they are too tired to eat or sleep or read or think. And Mama and

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Papa couldn't rest themselves with liquor. They were both high-strung, sensitive people, but Papa especially suffered because of the dullness of his life. We were back to the monotonous day after day, the same old thing and same old hours, same old clothes, same old food, same old place, same old worries, same old noise, same old penny-watching. Papa simply could not make a living for us any longer in New York. He could not now get a job as a cigar maker any more than he could before we had left for Little Rock.

But at last there came a change, and this time all of us, even Mama, were glad of it. Each evening from the street in front of the new flat, we used to watch the boats go by up the East River on their way to Boston. We knew the name of each Fall River boat, we knew the whistle and the shape of each one. They were an exciting promise of strange places to all the children on the block—those Fall River boats which in later years seemed so uncomfortable and dull. And now, to our amazement, we were on the way to Boston ourselves, on the biggest Fall River boat of them all.

The moving to Boston was not planned. Working people do not plan their lives. It takes a little money to carry out plans. They do what comes along; and sometimes it's good, and sometimes it's bad. In Boston Mama had a cousin whom we called Uncle Isidore, a small man, enormously fat, with a deep kind voice and a delicate gentle wife. She had had seven children. When the eighth was born, she was tired, and died. And there was Uncle Isidore with eight children, and one of them a baby, and not a relative of his own in Boston. He said Mama was the best

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mother he knew and it would be a help if she could live in Boston to advise him.

He was the foreman of a small high-grade cigar factory and, to bring us to Boston, he got Papa a job in the factory. It was a better job than Papa could get in New York—it paid twenty-five dollars a week—and so of course we went. We spent a night of wild delight sailing up the East River and the Sound—at last falling asleep utterly worn out, all in a row on mattresses spread on the floor in the women's saloon.

Mama didn't mind Boston as much as Little Rock. She had Uncle Isidore, who spoke German, and there were one or two friends from her home town in Prussia. And Uncle Isidore's eight children needed her. Of course there was no idea of living with them, but she would be near by. Mama had to be needed. She couldn't bear life otherwise.

After we moved to Boston we were all of us different. We lived in bigger, sunnier rooms with steam heat. We had a back yard to play in, and Benny and Dolly had icy ponds where they learned to skate. And we would steal exciting rides on sleighs. We liked the schools better. After I had been graduated at grammar school I went to the Girls Latin School, which was a foolish thing to do. This school prepares girls for college. But I thought I was going to college. There I got the same strictly classical training that boys got at the first English High School in Boston in the seventeenth century. The curriculum has remained almost unchanged. Ten hours a week of Latin, four hours a week of Greek. Little science, no economics, and little English. The school was then on Copley Square. In the spring Copley Square was planted with yellow

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tulips; one long side was taken up by the Public Library, and another by the Art Museum. We lived in Roxbury, and nearly every day I walked to school and home again, about two and a half miles each way. But that wasn't much for me to do, because Papa was walking five miles to work and five miles back to save carfare.

One Christmas Benny got a job delivering packages. He worked every afternoon and all day Saturday for two weeks, and earned enough money to buy two pairs of ice skates, one for himself and one for me. It was too bad, because mine did me little good. All I ever seemed to do on ice was to fall down and twist my ankle. Except when I was taking long walks or at school, I was back at my New York habit of reading greedily anything I could get hold of. Once a week I would go to the library; I would have Dolly's card and Papa's and my own and Benny's and my cousin Hattie's. From these trips I came home loaded with ten books—two books for them and eight for myself. Besides that, the master of the grammar school kept on lending me books from his library. I was so busy with my reading in English and French that I had no time to study lessons. It wasn't necessary anyway. Sitting around so much and having a large appetite I grew rather fat, for the only time in my life. But I could not always sit still. Sometimes my cousin Hattie and I would walk for miles out into the suburbs. We had a favorite game. We tried to get lost, and never succeeded. In the middle of the walk we would stop somewhere and buy a bag of doughnuts and eat them as we walked.

At least one afternoon a week I had to bake bread. Once a week Mama baked great loaves of white and rye

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bread, and once a week I did it. And sometimes I baked cup cakes and coffee cakes. And Sundays I helped with the cleaning. But mostly I sat and read. When I was mixing the bread and putting it in the oven and opening the oven door to see how it was rising and taking out the fresh loaves, I amused myself by singing and declaiming at the top of my voice. I think I liked Marmion most because it could be said loudest.

I wasn't as wise as the poised modern young girl. I would get a hard ball in my throat as I sang "Kathleen Mavourneen," and my heart would break over poor Alice and the caddish Ben Bolt. About my own troubles I felt no grief, only irritation and anger.

It was then that I got to know middle-class girls whose families owned the houses they lived in and whose fathers owned stores and factories—it was then that the doing without things which I had taken for granted as a small child became too hard to bear. It screamed in my ears unbearably all the time. Perhaps if I had been a greater soul I should not have minded it that the girls at school had "bicycle skirts" when I still wore long old-fashioned ones. But I did mind it. That most of them could play "Sweet Rosie O'Grady" on the piano, and I couldn't. That they could have photographs of Italy on their walls, and I couldn't. I was wretched when I saw other girls riding bicycles, and I couldn't have one. I minded all these things. They were not important. I know that now, but after all I could hardly be expected to know it then.

The time had come when I should have been going about with boys, but I was far too shy—so shy that nobody dreamed that I thought about boys at all. But I did.

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Well, if not exactly boys, I thought of a great hero with whom I would fall in love. He was a mixture of the Knight Templar in *Ivanhoe* and Louisa Alcott's bearded Professor Bhaer, with a dash of Jane Eyre's Rochester. Of all the heroines in fiction the one I admired most—or, rather, the one I wanted most to be—was Becky Sharp. Imagine Becky Sharp married to Professor Bhaer!

The boys were too young and silly anyway. I had a desperate crush on the master of the Grammar School, who lent me books. He was about thirty years older than I, and a bachelor. I watched with a mixture of amusement and shock my cousin's crush on the rabbi, not having the least notion in the world that I myself had a crush on my schoolmaster. I did not realize it until years later. I thought I was crazy about his mind—I was always thinking about minds. When I was seventeen, I went to a party where there were boys and young men. I was no help because I sat in the corner in silent agony while the others stood around the piano and sang songs.

Although I was part of a family, with the help of books I managed to live a somewhat solitary life, even on First Avenue in New York. After we came back from Little Rock the need to be by myself grew stronger and I managed to live many hours alone in my mind, in a four-room flat with the other children. In Boston, at first we lived on the fifth floor of a big old apartment house. It had a simple pulley-driven elevator which we had to run ourselves. When I went up alone I pulled the rope so slowly that the elevator barely moved, and so I could dream my dreams undisturbed.

In this confusion of money-worry and school and books

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and dreams about love, five years passed. It seems that most of that time I was only half awake. At school my usual love of contest woke me up and I was alert. But elsewhere none of the life around me touched me closely.

But when I was eighteen, I was awakened sharply. Papa's job gave out, and as there seemed to be nothing for us to do in Boston, we moved back to New York, and I had to go to work. I had to wake up. Even in Boston in my teens I was still a child. I wore my hair braided in a club at the back of my neck, I had a childish outlook. I was young for my eighteen years. But when I went to work, the childhood ended, and I grew up.

When Papa was seventy, he was riding one day in the subway. Next to him sat a girl reading a book, and he turned to her and said, "Pardon me, young lady, but do you like that book?"

She looked up with a friendly smile and said, "Yes, I like it very much."

"I'm glad," said Papa. "My daughter wrote it."

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